

2009 SPRING PREVIEW

THE ORIGINAL MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO NEBRASKA ATHLETICS

HUSKERS

ILLUSTRATED

THE BIG MYSTERY

WHO WILL BE NEBRASKA'S NEXT STARTING QUARTERBACK

APRIL 2009 | VOLUME 29 | NO. 4
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Check for updates at huskersillustrated.com.

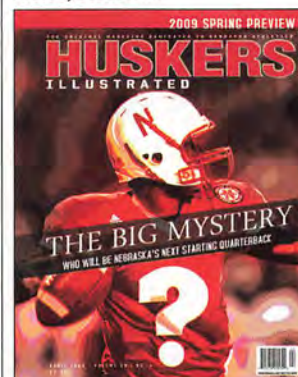
HUSKERS

ILLUSTRATED

ON THE COVER

The Huskers biggest question to answer this spring is who will emerge as the potential starting quarterback. As this photo illustration by Jeff Abele represents – the battle for the starting role is a mystery at this point.

Photo by Scott Bruhn



EXPLORING NEW TERRITORY

Huskers Illustrated continues to lead the way in providing Husker coverage



SINCE TAKING OVER Huskers Illustrated Magazine nearly one year ago, our staff (both at the magazine and online at HuskersIllustrated.com) has been working tirelessly to find new ways to bring the most in-depth coverage to Husker fans across the world.

While Huskers Illustrated has been the authority on Husker football for over 29 years, we continue to strive to lead the way in providing new and creative ways to follow Nebraska athletics.

This past week, Huskers Illustrated took another step toward cementing our position as the leader in Nebraska football coverage.

In a historic partnership for Huskers Illustrated Magazine, we have teamed with ESPN 1620 The Zone in Omaha to begin airing the Huskers Illustrated Radio Show. The Zone is the state's top sports talk radio station and will help expand our reach to Husker fans around the world.

Our show debuted in September of last year as a free feature on HuskersIllustrated.com and also has been available as a podcast through the iTunes Store. It should come as no surprise that your support for this show has been overwhelming.

For those of you that will be tuning in the first time, the Huskers Illustrated Radio Show is a one-hour sports talk show hosted by respected radio personality Chris Schmidt and co-hosted by our own Contributing

Editor, Mike Babcock. The show features intelligent interviews with former Husker standouts, the nation's top recruits and some of the nation's leading recruiting experts, including our own John Talman.

In addition to listening to the show through our original formats, it can now be heard live in the Omaha and Lincoln areas Saturdays at 8 a.m. on 1620 AM. For those outside of the listening area, the show will also be streamed live at www.1620thezone.com.

In the last year, we've created our free E-mail newsletter, which gives us the potential to instantly reach thousands of Husker fans with breaking news. While we knew this could be a powerful tool, the popularity of this new feature has taken even us by surprise.

We have also given our magazine subscribers the ability to read the magazine online, before it hits their mailbox for free. Despite these great new innovations, we are excited about a number of other opportunities we hope to announce in the near future.

As always we welcome your feedback and thank all of our readers (print and online) for your support. **N**

Send me your comments or story ideas to aaron@huskersillustrated.com.

HUSKERS
ILLUSTRATED
APRIL 2009 • VOLUME 29 • NO. 4

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Big Red Mailbag

SEND US YOUR LETTERS!! Huskers Illustrated loves to hear from its readers. Have an opinion to share about a story in this issue? Send us a letter. Have an opinion about the Huskers? Drop us a line. Want to share a photo from your last Husker game? We'll take it. **IF WE PRINT YOUR LETTER, WE'LL SEND YOU A SPECIAL HUSKER GIFT!** Send digital photos and letters to huskersillustrated@gmail.com and your regular snapshots and letters to HUSKERS ILLUSTRATED, 7755 S. 23rd St., Lincoln, NE 68512. Letters may be edited for length and grammar.



NOT A CROSS WORD

Like most of the letters you publish, I like most of the new format that you instituted this year, while retaining many of the things we have come to expect in the magazine. But I think there are several areas where improvements could be made.

First, Please give us geezers a break and publish in a readable size font. Going from a two column format to a three column format using microtype may allow you to add more words, but they are much harder to read.

Second, I didn't like it in mid-season when you replaced the defensive statistics on your game summary page with your erroneous bowl predictions or

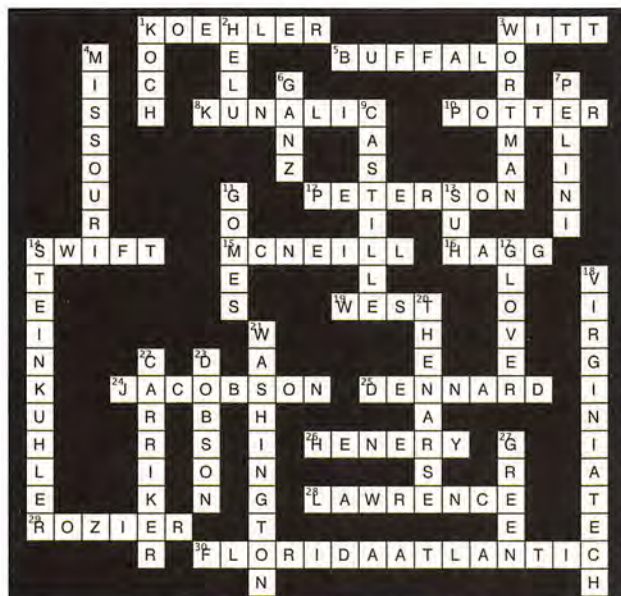
a picture that could have gone anywhere else. I like to work your crossword puzzle and sometimes need help, which often appears on that page.

Speaking of crossword puzzles, I just finished the March puzzle and wanted to check the accuracy of the February puzzle. But what you published as "February Crossword Solution" was actually a repeat of the January crossword solution. I hope you publish a correction in your next issue.

I like your magazine, but I think implementing these suggestions would make it even better.

DEN KUDRNA (via email)

CORRECTED FEBRUARY CROSSWORD SOLUTION



Den,

Thanks for the suggestions. We constantly evaluate every design element in our magazine, including the type size. We constantly battle decisions such as these and will continue to work to find a format that suits all of our readers.

Sorry to hear you didn't care for the bowl predictions (it was quite popular with many readers), however, I have to point out that we were the first publication to accurately predict a Gator Bowl appearance for the Huskers.

Our apologies for the error on last month's crossword puzzle. We've included the answer below! Thanks for reading.

AARON BABCOCK
General Manager/Editor

NORFOLK HATER?

Why is Norfolk missing from your Nebraska Map on the 2 minute drill page? It is the largest town by far in Northeast Nebraska and we are not on it.

I also noticed that Tyler Daake from Norfolk Catholic, who committed to walk on at Nebraska, was not in your recruiting issue. He is a kicker. I didn't know if there was some information we didn't know about.

Keep up the great work, I look forward to receiving every issue.

MARK LOVE
Norfolk, NE (via email)

Mark,

We have such a huge following in Madison, Neb., that Norfolk had to be removed from the map...

Actually Mark, the cities on our Hometown Hero map are constantly being changed to make room for cities featured in the magazine. It should definitely not be interpreted as a comment about your fine city.

However, for your viewing pleasure Norfolk is in this month's map (at the expense of our loyal readers in Madison). As for next month... all bets are off!

As for you question regarding Tyler Daake, the University of Nebraska does not have him listed on their official list of walk-ons as of publication date.

Recruited walk-on recruits are not listed until they have completed all paperwork and been accepted to the university.

AARON BABCOCK

500 ISSUES

We are just two-plus months away from mailing our 2009 Football Yearbook. This year's edition will be our 500th issue and will be filled with a number of special features.

Don't wait to make sure your subscription is current.

If you don't subscribe, the yearbook retails for \$9.95, of course it's free with your annual subscription. **THE STAFF**

2MinuteDrill



SPRING FLING

Spring football games aren't usually memorable. Sometimes, aspects of the glorified scrimmages are, but rarely the scrimmages themselves.

What do you remember most about the 2008 spring game? Probably that it was **BO PELINI**'s first as head coach. And that it attracted a sellout crowd of 80,149.

The final score – Reds 24, Whites 14 – wasn't particularly significant, nor was who scored the touchdowns or led the teams in tackling. Pelini was on the field the entire time, standing behind the offense, a reminder that it was, first and foremost, a practice.

In the spring game, it's not whether you win or lose, but rather, it's whether you're healthy afterward. Injuries are always a concern. For instance, All-Big Eight linebacker **MIKE KNOX** suffered a knee injury in the 1984 spring game

and missed the 1984 season.

The 1986 spring game was memorable because of its score – 70-14. **LAWRENCE PETE**, a 6-foot-2, 280-pound middle guard, lined up at I-back in the third quarter (an **NDAMUKONG SUH** predecessor) and came up short of the end zone on a 2-yard carry.

The combined points in 1986 were one short of the record, set in 1971 – 64-21.

The teams combined for a record 18 fumbles in the 1965 spring game, a statistic that, no doubt, turned coach **BOB DEVANEY**'s face as red as his hat.

An alumni team defeated the varsity 14-0 in the 1956 spring game. Even if that's not memorable, it certainly sticks out when you scan the list of scores.

The 1996 spring game was memorable for its timing. Two days before,

BROOK BERRINGER died in the crash of a small plane. *Huskies Illustrated* described the April afternoon: "What would have been a preview of the team that will attempt to make college football history by winning a third consecutive national championship became a tearful farewell to Berringer, not only from his former coaches and teammates but also from a record crowd of 48,659."

Said **TOM OSBORNE** afterward: "You know how the old cliché goes – when someone young passes away, there is a tendency to say good things about them, and in Brook's case, it's all true. He was a fine person, and that's what you always saw in Brook."

"I have no regrets about him. I don't think the length of his life is as important as the quality of his life."

That was worth remembering.

2MinuteDrill



CONSIDER THE ODDS: The moment is among the most dramatic in Cornhusker football history. On the final play in regulation of the 1997 Nebraska-Missouri game in Columbia, Mo., **MATT DAVISON** caught **SCOTT FROST**'s pass after the ball deflected off the leg of **SHEVIN WIGGINS** for a tying touchdown (with **KRIS BROWN**'s extra-point kick, of course). The FSN television network's "Sport Science" determined the odds of that play being successful were 1 in more than 3 million – 3,240,000 to be exact. The show, which attempts to recreate such sports moments, was able to do so, with Arizona Cardinals quarterback **MATT LEINERT** throwing and Davison catching, on the second try.

COACHING CRADLE

Prior to the BCS national championship game between Florida and Oklahoma on Jan. 8, *The Wall Street Journal* published a story about current college football coaches from Ohio. Florida's **URBAN MEYER** and Oklahoma's **BOB STOOPS** are both from Ohio, Meyer from Ashtabula and Stoops from Youngstown, the same as Cornhusker coach **BO PELINI**, of course. The story referred to Pelini and Missouri's **GARY PINKEL**, another Ohioan, as "two of the college game's rising stars."

The *Wall Street Journal*'s **DARREN EVERSON** wrote: "Less than 4 percent of the country's population lives in Ohio, but 15 percent of college football's major-conference head coaches were born there – the most of any state." In addition, Everson wrote, 14 of the last 18 teams in the national championship game have had head coaches with Ohio ties, coached there if not born there.

PRO TESTING

Former Cornhusker offensive tackle **LYDON MURTHA** produced impressive numbers in testing at the NFL Combine in Indianapolis in late February. The 6-foot-7, 306-pound Murtha had the best times among offensive linemen in the 40-yard dash (4.89 seconds), the three-cone drill (:07.06) and the 20-yard shuttle run (:04.34). He also had the second-best vertical jump (35 inches) among offensive linemen and the fourth-best broad jump (9 feet, 2 inches).

MATT SLAUSON, **NATE SWIFT**, **MARLON LUCKY**, **ZACH POTTER** and **CODY GLENN** also participated in the Combine. Glenn, who moved to linebacker as a senior, was listed as a running back.

Representatives from an estimated 20 NFL teams also came to Lincoln in mid-March for the annual Pro Day at the Hawks Championship Center, where 19 former Cornhuskers, including those invited to the Combine, were tested.

SIDELINES

STILL ON FRIDAY

The Big 12 has considered moving the Nebraska-Colorado game from the Friday after Thanksgiving to Saturday. But that won't happen in 2009. In early March, the conference and ESPN announced that the Cornhuskers and Buffaloes will again play on Friday (Nov. 27) at Boulder, with a national telecast on ABC. Kickoff has been set for 2:30 p.m. CT. It will be the 20th consecutive season that Nebraska has played on the day after Thanksgiving, and the 14th against Colorado.

From 1990 to 1995, the Cornhuskers played Oklahoma on that day.

COWBOYS COMING

Nebraska last played Wyoming in 1994. **BROOK BERRINGER** started at quarterback, with **TOMMIE FRAZIER** sidelined by a blood-clot problem. Berringer led the Cornhuskers to victory, and suffered a partially collapsed lung in the process. The Cornhuskers and Cowboys are scheduled to play again on Sept. 24, 2011, at Laramie, Wyo. The teams also are slated to play on Aug. 31, 2013 and Sept. 17, 2016, both games at Memorial Stadium. Nebraska, which has never played in Laramie, leads the series 5-0.

Previously:

1934, Nebraska 50-0
1968, Nebraska 13-10
1983, Nebraska 56-20
1984, Nebraska 42-7
1994, Nebraska 42-32

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Keeping a staff intact

The Cornhuskers will go into spring practice with the same coaching staff that produced a 9-4 record and Gator Bowl victory in **BO PELINI**'s first season as head coach. The *Lincoln Journal Star* pointed out, recently, that Nebraska's football coaching staff hasn't remained the same from one season to the next since **FRANK SOLICH** restructured following the 2002 season, replacing **CRAIG BOHL**, **NELSON BARNES**, **GEORGE DARLINGTON**, **MILT TENOPIR**, **DAN YOUNG** and **DAVE GILLESPIE**.

After the 2003 season, then athletic director **STEVE PEDERSON** fired Solich and staff, with new head coach **BILL CALLAHAN** retaining only **TURNER GILL** and **SCOTT DOWNING**. After the 2004 season, Gill resigned to handle player development for the Green Bay Packers.

After the 2005 season, Downing left to be the head coach at Northern Colorado. After the 2006 season, **JAY NORVELL** (UCLA) and **JOHN BLAKE** (North Carolina) left. And after the 2007 season, Callahan and staff were fired with Pelini retaining only offensive assistants **SHAWN WATSON** and **TED GILMORE**.

Pelini told the *Journal Star* that stability is "huge." However, he said, "I want guys to move up in the profession." And that might have happened in at least one case over the winter. Linebackers coach **MIKE EKELER** turned down an offer to be defensive coordinator at South Florida twice, according to the Tampa, Fla., *Tribune*. The second offer from coach **JIM LEAVITT** reportedly came in early March, just before the start of spring practice at South Florida.

SIDELINES

IT'S BACK

Former Cornhusker All-America offensive guard **BRENDEN STAI** recently retrieved the AFC championship ring he received as a rookie with the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1995. The ring was stolen during a move after he was traded to the Jacksonville Jaguars nine years ago.

The ring was returned by a Pompano Beach, Fla., company that buys gold jewelry. It was minus diamonds and onyx, according to the Associated Press. But at least Stai got it back.

"I thought I would never see it again," he told the AP.

ACADEMIC HONOREES

The 2008 Big 12 Commissioner's Fall Academic Honor Roll included 61 current and former Cornhusker football players, among them eight who carried perfect 4.0 grade-point averages for the semester: Austin Cassidy, Sean Fisher, Aaron Gillaspie, Dan Glassman, Victory Haines, Sam Meginnis, Todd Peterson and Patrick Witt.

Peterson (nutrition, exercise and health science), Dan Titchener (accounting) and Tyler Wortman, (mechanical engineering), seniors in 2008, were nine-time honorees.

Lance Brandenburg, a senior in 2007, and Andy Christensen, a senior-to-be, were eight-time members of the Commissioner's Honor Roll (fall and spring), recognizing those who earned a 3.0 or better grade-point average during the semester in which they were honored.

The fall honor roll also included 22 Cornhusker freshmen football players.



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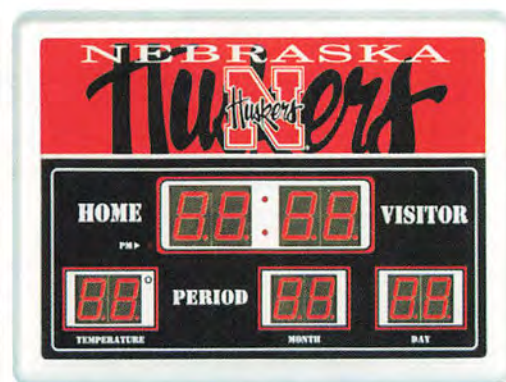
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One, wonderful season under center

Bobby Reynolds was Nebraska's definitive one-season football wonder. The season was 1950. He was a sophomore. Greatness was predicted, and with good reason.

He rushed for a school-record 1,342 yards, averaging 7 yards per carry. He earned the nickname "Mr. Touchdown," with 19. He led the nation in scoring with 157 points. And he earned All-America recognition. Because of injuries, however, he was rarely healthy as a junior and senior and played in a relative handful of games, never approaching his accomplishments of 1950.

What he might have achieved had he remained healthy must be left to the imagination. But his name almost certainly would have been mentioned with those of the greatest running backs in school history ... Mike Rozier, Lawrence Phillips and Ahman Green, among them.

The same could be said of Joe Ganz. He was, effectively, a one-season wonder, though for a different reason. He produced remarkable numbers in his final season instead of

his first. After getting a chance at the end of his junior season – because of an injury to Sam Keller – Ganz rewrote the single-season passing section of the school record book as a senior, completing 285-of-420 attempts (67.9 percent) for 3,568 yards and 25 touchdowns with 11 interceptions.

With only one season and a few games, Ganz didn't work his way to the top of the list of Nebraska's greatest quarterbacks ... Tommie Frazier, Eric Crouch and Turner Gill, among them. But he persevered and carved a place for himself in the Cornhuskers' quarterback tradition.

Here are five other quarterbacks who excelled in a single season during their careers.

FRED DUDA (1965, SENIOR)



Duda earned the starting job as a junior, after backing up Dennis Claridge as a sophomore – and starting three games when Claridge was sidelined by an ankle sprain. But Duda suffered a broken leg early in the third game in 1964 against Iowa State and missed the remainder of the season. He began his senior season as a back-up to junior Bob Churchich but stepped in against, ironically enough, Iowa State and started for the remainder of the season, leading the Cornhuskers to a No. 3 national ranking and what turned out to be a national title match-up against Alabama in the Orange Bowl game.

Coach Bear Bryant's Crimson Tide defeated Nebraska 39-28, however, the only loss in a game Duda started during his career in high school (Chicago Weber) as well as in college.

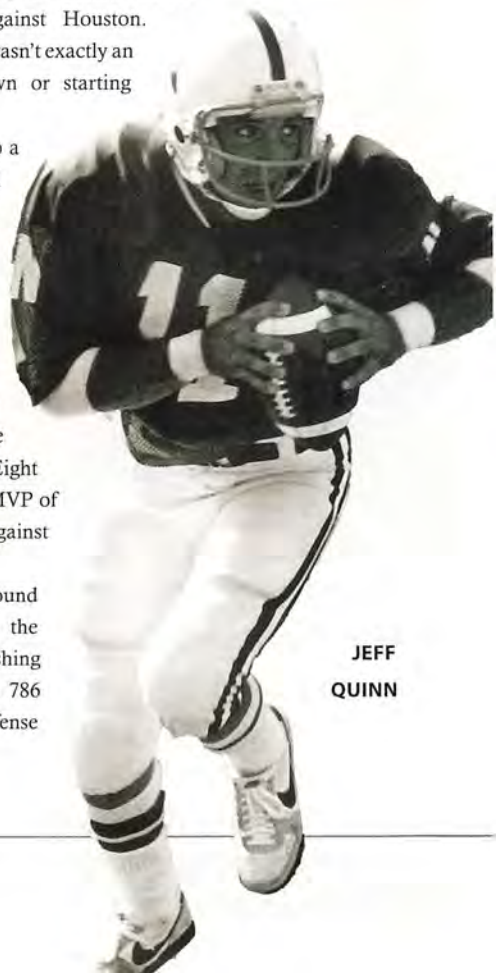
JEFF QUINN (1980, SENIOR)



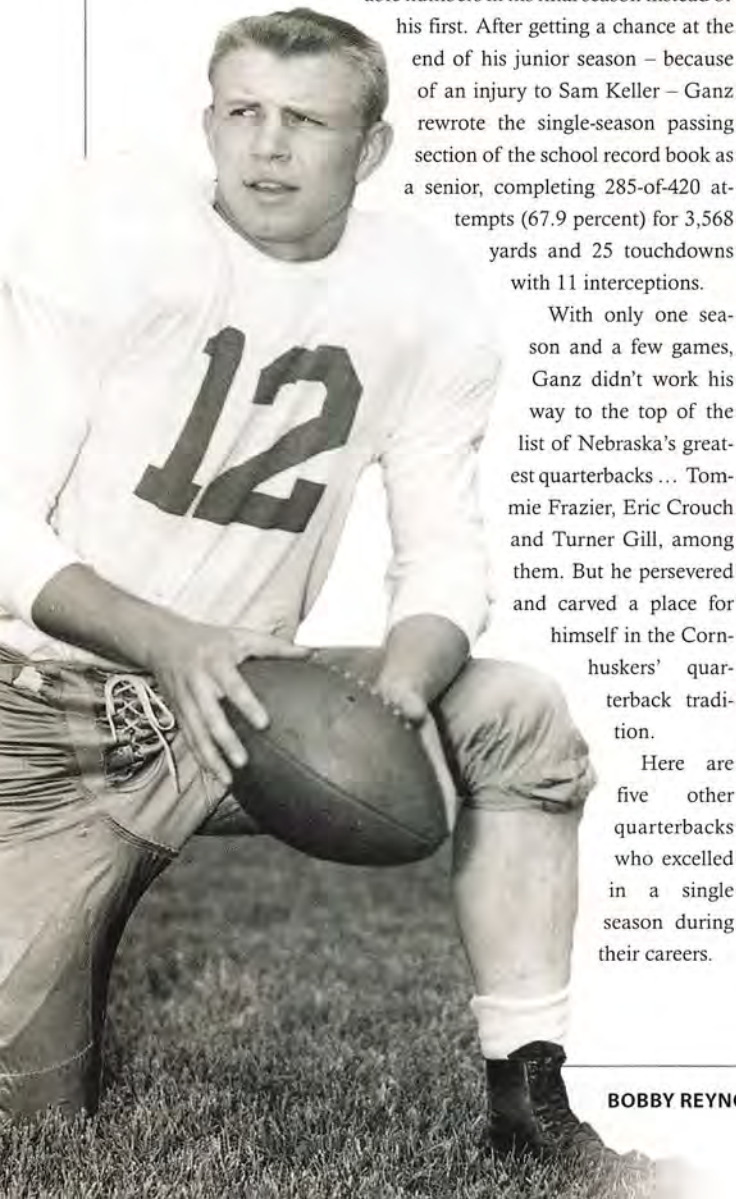
Quinn began his junior season as the starter, directing victories against Utah State and Iowa before being sidelined by a leg injury. He returned to start the final three games, including a Cotton Bowl loss against Houston. So he wasn't exactly an unknown or starting from scratch in 1980.

He led the Cornhuskers to a 10-2 record and No. 7 national ranking. He completed 96-of-157 passes for 1,337 yards and 14 touchdowns with just six interceptions. His NCAA pass efficiency rating of 154.5 was the second best in school history – and still ranks sixth. He earned second-team All-Big Eight honors and was named the MVP of a 31-17 Sun Bowl victory against Mississippi State.

The 6-foot-3, 206-pound Quinn also finished as the Cornhuskers' career-rushing leader at quarterback, with 786 yards, as Tom Osborne's offense moved toward the option.



JEFF
QUINN



BOBBY REYNOLDS

2MinuteDrill

GERRY GDOWSKI (1989, SENIOR)

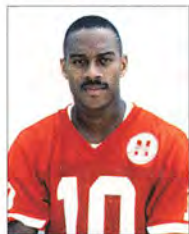


For one season, Gdowski was about as good as any quarterback who ever played for Nebraska. He didn't redshirt, playing for the freshmen and then backing up Steve Taylor for two seasons. During those two seasons, Gdowski threw 10 passes and rushed 35 times.

He earned the starting job as a senior, in competition with sophomore Mickey Joseph, and led Nebraska to a 10-1 record and No. 6 ranking during the regular season. He was first-team All-Big Eight and co-offensive player of the year according to the conference coaches, completing 71-of-136 passes (52.2 percent) for 1,326 yards and 19 touchdowns with only two interceptions. His NCAA pass efficiency rating of 177.3 remains the school record. He also rushed for 925 yards and 13 touchdowns, averaging a whopping 7.91 yards per carry, the school record for 100 or more carries.



KEITHEN MCCANT (1991, SENIOR)



McCant did nothing during his first four seasons at Nebraska to indicate he would have the senior season he did. He shared the starting job on the freshman-junior varsity team, redshirted and made brief appearances in nine games as a sophomore and junior, rushing eight times and throwing three passes. He began the 1991 season third on the depth chart, behind

Tom Haase and Mickey Joseph, and came off the bench in a 59-28 opening-game victory against Utah State. But he started from the second game on and earned first-team All-Big Eight recognition for the 9-2-1 Cornhuskers.

He averaged 5.6 yards per carry and completed 97-of-168 passes (57.7 percent) for 1,465 yards and 13 touchdowns, with eight interceptions. The passing yardage was the seventh-most in school history.



BROOK BERRINGER (1994, JUNIOR)



Berringer redshirted his first season, which meant his career coincided with that of Tommie Frazier. Therein lays the story, which every Cornhusker fan should know by now – and which is memorialized by a statue at the entrance to the Tom and Nancy Osborne Complex.

One season doesn't define Berringer's career, of course. He persevered without complaint and prepared for the opportunity that came when Frazier was sidelined by a blood-clot problem in 1994. He started seven games that season, the only starts of his career, led Nebraska to the Big Eight title and then teamed with Frazier to give Tom Osborne his first national championship in the Orange Bowl game against Miami. His numbers, though secondary, were impressive, 1,295 yards and 10 touchdowns passing and 279 yards and six touchdowns rushing. He was second-team All-Big Eight.



HOMETOWN HEROES



N

Dick Rutherford - Beatrice, NE



The Nebraska football teams for which **DICK RUTHERFORD** played had a combined record of 23-0-1, the scoreless tie coming with South Dakota in the third game of the 1914 season. The Beatrice High School graduate, who also played basketball,

was a fan favorite and according to the student yearbook, "for three years a brilliant halfback."

Rutherford was coach **JUMBO STIEHM**'s team captain in 1915, as well as a member of the Innocents Society, the university's exclusive senior honorary.

As a sophomore, Rutherford joined another Beatrice High grad, senior captain **LEN PURDY**, in the "Stiehm rollers" backfield. "Never ... did he (Rutherford) fail to make a gain when called upon to carry the ball," the 1914 Cornhusker said. As a junior and senior, he did more blocking than rushing, helping to clear the way for **GUY CHAMBERLIN**, who earned All-America recognition in 1915. Rutherford was a three-time all-conference selection, a team player and a perfect fit in Stiehm's demanding system. Players rarely came off the field, often despite injuries.

When Stiehm left Nebraska for Indiana and more money following the 1915 season, he planned to take Rutherford with him as an assistant coach. Rather than add insult to injury, however, he was persuaded to release the popular athlete from that commitment, and Rutherford remained at Nebraska as an assistant to Stiehm's successor, **E.J. "DOC" STEWART**. **N**

DICK RUTHERFORD

Hometown: Beatrice, Neb.
County: Gage (county seat)
Population: 12,496 (2000 census)
Distance from Lincoln: 37 miles

Nebraska football lettermen:
 Harris Andrews, HB (1936-37)
 Joe Armstrong, OG (1966-67-68)
 Elbert L. Bloodgood, QB (1923-24)
 John Cook, QB (1915-16-17)
 William L. Day, C (1917-19-20)
 Harold Frahm, HB (1928-29-30)
 William Hawkins, T (1955-56-57)
 Robert Hohn, HB (1963-64)
 Harold Holmbeck, T (1931-34-35)
 Chuck Jones, DB (1974-75)
 Max Kennedy, HB (1951)
 Max Martz, E (1957-58-59)
 Harold R. Mulligan, E (1912)
 Leonard Purdy, HB (1911-12-13)
 Ted E. Riddell, E (1915-16-17)
 Richard B. Rutherford, HB (1913-14-15)
 Ben Zajicek, WR (2001-02-04)

DID YOU KNOW? Len Purdy was named to sports writer (and referee) Walter Eckersall's prestigious All-Western team in 1913. John Cook, yet another Beatrice High graduate, was Dick Rutherford's teammate in 1915 (a reserve quarterback) and earned all-conference recognition in 1917. Joe Armstrong earned All-America honors in 1968. The Homestead National Monument of America is located near Beatrice on the site of Daniel Freeman's claim, the first to be filed under the Homestead Act of 1862 – signed by President Abraham Lincoln.

SIDELINES



CATCHING ON AT OREGON

SCOTT FROST was the passer

during his stellar career at Nebraska. Now, he's on the other end. In late January, then-Oregon coach **MIKE BELLOTTI** (he subsequently stepped aside as coach to be athletic director) hired Frost as the Ducks' receivers coach. Frost served as co-defensive coordinator and linebackers coach at Northern Iowa last season, after coaching the linebackers in 2007. He was a graduate assistant at Kansas State in 2006. Frost began coaching as a grad assistant at Nebraska in 2002, after a brief NFL career.

MOVING ON, AGAIN

You remember **HARRISON BECK**, right? Well, Nebraska's quarterback-of-the-future in 2005 will be competing for the starting job at North Alabama in the spring. Beck transferred to the Football Championship Subdivision school from North Carolina State, where he saw action and started the past two seasons after sitting out in 2006. By moving down in an NCAA classification he is eligible immediately. **TERRY BOWDEN** is beginning his first year as head coach at North Alabama.



STATE OF THE HUSKERS

BY CURT MCKEEVER

No pressure for Cooper

IN THE FALL, he's got no time for baseball – his favorite sport and the one that's likely to set up his future.

This spring you're not going to see him display the wide receiver skills that gave him the opportunity of a full-ride scholarship and instant recognition as a Nebraska football player.

Welcome to Khiry Cooper's wacky but wonderful world.

"I think probably the hardest part is it's just so time-consuming," said the 6-foot-2, 194-pounder from Shreveport, La. "But Coach (Bo) Pelini, I'm blessed to be with him. During football I just do football and (during) baseball I just do baseball. That's the good part about that. I don't have to do both and have too much on my plate."

Not that Cooper minds being busy. As his academic major of construction management would suggest, the kid loves to go to work.

First, consider that he turned down lucrative offers from the Anaheim Angels to enroll at NU after the organization selected him in the fifth round of last June's Major League Draft.

"It was a pretty good amount, especially for an 18-year-old kid coming out of high school," said Cooper, who instead of allowing himself a nice signing-bonus gift and heading off to rookie ball, took summer school classes at NU before spending his first football season as a practice-only player. "I just felt that school was where I needed to be."

While his early schedule left him playing catch-up with his soon-to-be baseball

teammates when workouts resumed in January, Cooper humbly joined the fray.

"It's a challenge and I love a challenge," he said of being forced into taking a crash course in Mike Anderson's brand style of baseball, "so it's not something that's pressuring me. Those guys will make me work harder for it."

That attitude has helped Cooper get plenty of early playing time. But Anderson, knowing full well the lofty expectations placed on his smooth-fielding outfielder, cautions that even someone as athletically gifted as Cooper will have a learning curve.

So, while Anderson might have been hoping for early impact from Cooper, "My guess," he noted, "is it's going to be the second half of the year more than it is the first."

Cooper promptly showed Husker fans what Anderson meant by that during Nebraska's home opener against North Dakota.

When he came to bat with runners in scoring position in the eighth inning of a game NU trailed 6-5, Cooper had previously popped up a sacrifice bunt attempt, missed a double-steal sign and popped out with runners aboard.

He then got two quick strikes on him before doing something that made Sioux coach Jeff Dobson wince.

"He hurt us like a fifth-round pick is supposed to," Dobson said after Cooper drove a 0-2 pitch into center field for a single that provided the go-ahead runs in a 10-6 victory.

How's that for contributing?

"You're not going to succeed each time, but it's something you've got to want to be in that spot," Cooper noted.

As he stood on first base, Haymarket Park echoed in appreciation.

C-O-O-O-O-P-E-R.

The kid – who a year earlier had led Calvary Baptist Academy High to its second straight Louisiana Class 2A championship – would later acknowledge the chants, and more.

"Husker fans, they're great. My teammates are great, but I play for God," Cooper said. "That's my expectation. If we win, that's ultimately what we want to do, but as a team we want to glorify God no matter if we win or lose. I want to play well, also, but that's my main objective."

It's no wonder then that junior outfielder DJ Belfonte was acting as if he knew the Huskers had added a special piece to their family.

"He's easy to get along with, he's got personality and we're glad to have him on this team," Belfonte said. "I don't know how much he likes the cold weather, but he's enjoying the stuff ... I have zero worries about him. He's just going to play the game."

Doesn't matter whether it's the sport he truly loves or the one that's paying for his college education, either.

"I've been doing it all my life," Cooper said. "It's tough, but if you want to do it, you do it."

"It's a pretty neat experience (doing it at Nebraska). I don't really see it as too much pressure." **N**



Prince Amukamara

6-1, 195, Junior, Defensive Back, Glendale, Ariz.

Prince Amukamara has visited Nigeria more than once. His most memorable visit was the most recent, when he was 11-years-old. He spent three months living in a village of "400 to 500."

The village was surrounded by jungle.

Amukamara's parents are from Nigeria and have family there. "They live in this compound where everyone's last name is Amukamara," said Prince. "It's just a big family compound."

He arrived after a 22-hour trip with stops in New York and Germany. And his parents

"didn't tell us when we were leaving," Amukamara said. "They would make jokes like, 'We're staying here forever.' I just remember crying because there was no way I wanted to stay."

"As the months started going, I got used to it."

Even though he also "got a small case of malaria, because it was mosquitoes everywhere," and lost 20 pounds, the experience was such that he plans to return.

"My mom keeps saying she found a wife for me back home," he said.

Hi: What was the most difficult part of adjusting to Nebraska?

AMUKAMARA: The climate, just the weather. It's cold here. It's different from just waking up, the sun waking you up in Arizona. Here you wake up to 8 degrees; I'm looking for the other digit. And the people; it was definitely a cultural shock. Where I lived was diverse. It probably took just a week (to adjust). I'm a very social person. And being around with my teammates; we went to summer school and lived in the dorms. So we got used to each others' personalities real quick.

Hi: What do you have on your iPod?

AMUKAMARA: I have movies, music ... Roy Helu and Eric Hagg and Will (Henry) got me listening to Christian and gospel music, so I listen to that ... stuff like Taylor Swift. I like a song called "Chicken Fried," I heard that here. And me and Marcus (Mendoza) like listening to "Cotton Eye Joe."

Hi: What's the best movie you've seen lately?

AMUKAMARA: Definitely, The Dark Knight; the Joker is unreal, unbelievable in that movie. That's one of the best movies I've seen.

Hi: What do you expect to be doing 10 years from now?

AMUKAMARA: Hopefully, I'll be married, have twins. I want to have kids, twins, and just have a lot of joy in my life, still keep in touch with my friends and family, go back to Nigeria. My mom's sister has twins. I wanted a twin. Most people would ask why.

Hi: What do you miss most about Glendale, Ariz., other than family and friends?

AMUKAMARA: Probably Jack in the Box, the restaurants. And I don't know, just the weather.

Hi: What kind of music will you absolutely not listen to?

AMUKAMARA: I'm open to anything ... let me see, probably, orchestra or jazz.

Hi: What do you remember most about your Nebraska recruiting visit?

AMUKAMARA: I came here with Eric Hagg and Jaivorio Burkes. We were all from Arizona, so we all planned our visits the same. Nebraska was the first college game I ever saw in real life, a good experience. They played Colorado. I had chances to go see ASU when I was younger, but I really wasn't into it. My host was Brandon Jackson. Jaivorio's host was Mike McNeill, and Eric's host was Mike Smith.

Hi: What's your favorite thing to eat?

AMUKAMARA: Definitely, wings and fries; the best wings, at Down the Hatch and Raising Cane's.

Hi: If your life were made into a movie, whom would you pick to play the part of you?

AMUKAMARA: The first one that comes to my head is Jim Carrey. He's out of control.

Hi: Did you ask for a No. 21 jersey when you came here?

AMUKAMARA: Yes, I had it in high school. I had a superstition. I was pretty successful with that number in high school, so I thought I'd keep it going. When I was a senior (in high school), I looked on the (Nebraska) roster to see. Titus Brothers had 21 at the time, and then I guess he left when I came here, so it was just convenient for me.





Mike "Red" Beran

"Red Man" was created in the Husker weight room

FORTY-ONE YEARS AGO, Mike "Red"

Beran walked on at Nebraska with a small body, a big heart and a gigantic dream – to play for the Huskers, the team that included his idols ... Pete Tatman, Larry Wachholtz, Freeman White, Dennis Morrison and LaVerne Allers.

"I was 13- or 14-years-old when we started driving from Ord (Neb.) to Lincoln and headed straight to the Kellogg Center so we could watch those guys in the lobby before they boarded the bus for Memorial Stadium," Beran recalled. "I only lettered twice in high school and never made an all-state team, but I told myself I'd do whatever I could just to get the chance to have the same kind of experience they did."

Funny how the mind influences the drive, the determination and the passion required to live out a dream.

"Red Beran was the hardest worker I've ever seen in a weight room or, for that matter, on a football field," said former Nebraska All-America defensive tackle and NFL All-Pro John Dutton. "He did everything humanly possible to earn his playing time. There isn't a player on our team who didn't have the utmost respect for the Red Man. He made us all dig a little deeper and give more than we thought we had in us because that's what he did every day at Nebraska."

Beran smiles when he hears such high praise. "I was 6-foot and weighed 186 pounds in 1968," he said. "There were five offensive guards on the freshmen team – four on scholarship and me. I knew the first day I got here that I was going to have to out-work every one of those guys."

And he did, growing into a 235-pound letterman with deceiving speed and exceptional toughness on the Huskers' 1970



MIKE "RED" BERAN

LETTERS: 1970-72

POSITION: Offensive guard

CURRENT: Metal laser cutter in Lincoln, Neb. Former railroader

WIFE: Colleen

CHILDREN: Jim (21), Jeff (18)

and '71 national championship teams. He started at right guard on Bob Devaney's final team in 1972.

How'd he do it?

"Boyd Epley called me his first creation," Beran said of the former Nebraska strength and conditioning coach. "He said I was Exhibit A for what could happen when an athlete puts his heart and soul into weight training."

Former two-time All-America center Ric

Bonness, a linebacker for the Super Bowl champion Oakland Raiders in 1977, became Nebraska's first "Lifter of the Year" in 1973 – the year after Beran graduated.

"Would I have been the first if we'd given out the award in 1972?" Beran asked, repeating a question. "I would have to say yes because I was the only player who lived in the weight room."

At least that's what his teammates would say.

And, oh yes, there is one last thing. About those four freshmen offensive guards who were on scholarship in 1968?

Red Beran knows who they are, but very few, if any, Nebraska fans would remember their names.

Unlike the Red Man, not one of them lettered. **N**

Hunting in their own backyard

BY RICK SHAW

Over the years, a fundamental philosophy of Nebraska football recruiting has been to first identify Division I talent within state boundaries and then build from there. Coach **BO PELINI** and his staff have, apparently, taken hold of that strategy with full force heading into the 2010 recruiting cycle.

Though only one Nebraska prepster has garnered a scholarship offer from the Huskers at this point, several others have gained early interest from the Big Red brass.

The first, and currently only, pledge for the 2010 class came from Aurora (Neb.) standout **ANDREW RODRIGUEZ**. The 6-foot-6, 300-pound offensive tackle delivered his commitment to the Husker staff in late November.

"I was just thinking last night, I thought about staying in-state with my family and friends, and I started playing football in Nebraska—so I'm going to stay in Nebraska," Rodriguez said at the time. "The [Nebraska] coaches were excited. I talked to coach (**MARVIN**) **SANDERS**, (**BARNEY**) **COTTON**, and coach (**BO**) **PELINI**. They were all excited and said hopefully I'll be a big part of the team. They were just happy."

Rodriguez is widely considered to be the top prospect in the state heading into the 2009 season and a likely candidate for post-season all-American honors. Listed by Rivals.com among the nation's top 250 prospects "to watch" for the 2010 class, Rodriguez admits there was a lot that went into his decision to attend college in Lincoln.



"The academics, how they stay on top of their students, and they just check in with them grade-wise," Rodriguez said about his future university. "That's what I'm looking forward to. I'm looking to get my education because I want to go far in football, but you never know what's going to happen."

A two-way starter since his freshman season, Rodriguez earned first-team All-Nebraska honors in 2008 while helping Aurora win the Class B state championship.

Several schools including LSU, Notre Dame and Texas were sending mail to Rodriguez at the time of his commitment. However, the blue-chipper for Aurora said that none of that will matter because he's "done" with recruiting.

"This is 100 percent in the books done," Rodriguez said.

Another Nebraska lineman drawing early looks from the Huskers as well as

other major colleges is **JESSE HINZ** of Beatrice. The 6-foot-4, 280-pound prospect earned first-team Class B all-state honors on defense as a junior. His head coach, **BOB SEXTON**, said his talented prospect could project favorably on either side in college.

I think he can be dominating there (at defensive tackle) when we play him in that three-technique," Sexton said. "Whereas the offensive side, he's probably more fit for that right now after watching him this past season. I'd say going in to last season, I would have projected him as a defensive tackle. But who knows what

college coaches will project him as – that will be up to them."

"He's a great kid – he's a smart kid. I think his GPA is a 3.7 this year. He's a hard worker and he's got a goal to play Division I football. I think he's got a great opportunity to do it. I think he's going to probably have to go out and probably have a great senior season, but I think the potential is there for him to earn a Division I scholarship."

Hinz has been receiving frequent correspondence from Iowa, Kansas, Kansas State, Nebraska, Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Oregon and Stanford. However, at this point, he said he's looking hardest at the Huskers and Sooners.

"I went to games at both Nebraska and Oklahoma this past fall," Hinz said. "Those would be my top two choices. Growing up in Nebraska, you're naturally a Husker fan

and I respect **BO PELINI**. Oklahoma, when I got invited down to the visit - I really didn't know what to expect with that either, but I realized they have a lot of tradition, great coaches and players too."

A third prospect from Nebraska that has a good opportunity to earn a major college tender is **RON COLEMAN** of North High School in Omaha. The 6-foot-0, 240-pound athlete said that coaches have expressed interest in his abilities on both sides of the ball.

"My college position would really depend on the style of offense or defense that a team runs," Coleman said. "In a pro-style offense I'd be a good running back candidate who could guarantee you that four to five yards per carry. On defense, I could play middle linebacker against pro-style offenses. Against the spread offenses, I'd probably be better as a rush end or defensive tackle."

"Nebraska's coaches were talking to my coach about me playing d-tackle or d-end because of my (pad) level and how I use my hands," Coleman said.

As a junior, Coleman earned first-team All-Nebraska honors after tallying 67 tackles, 10 tackles for loss, three sacks and one interception from his nose guard post. He also ran for 810 yards and 21 touchdowns as a running back, showcasing good speed (4.75-second 40-yard dash) and power (375-pound bench press) at the position. He's also a three-time state wrestling champion.

Coleman has garnered early interest from Alabama, Oregon, Notre Dame, Maryland, Oklahoma State, Kansas, Kansas State, in addition to the Huskers. However, he said at this stage in the recruiting process, he's keeping things "pretty open."

"I like a lot of schools," Coleman said.

"I like Alabama because of the pro-style offense that they run and USC because they involve the fullback in their offense a lot. With Nebraska, I like the way they use their defensive tackles and defensive ends to rush the quarterback. My dad has always liked Nebraska and has been a big fan. I just grew up liking college football. I didn't really have a favorite team."

Some additional Nebraska prospects getting looks from Division I schools



include running back **ANTARIES DANIELS** (5-foot-11, 190-pounds) from Omaha Northwest, tight end **AUSTIN KACZOR** (6-foot-4, 210-pounds) from Ewing, offensive lineman **GARY HIATT** (6-foot-3, 265-pounds) of Omaha Millard North and defensive tackle **JEFF UHER** (6-foot-0, 257-pounds) of Omaha Creighton Prep.

All of those prospects, in addition to many others, will get an opportunity to prove their scholarship worthiness to Nebraska and others in summer camps and throughout the 2009 season.

One thing for sure, the Huskers are dedicated to keeping the state's best talent "at home". Coach Pelini understands that, at Nebraska, it's a good recipe for success. **N**

SIDELINES



HALL OF FAMERS, MAYBE

Former Cornhuskers **TREV ALBERTS** (1990-93), **WILL SHIELDS** (1989-92) and **GRANT WISTROM** (1994-97) are among 76 candidates for election into the College Football Hall of Fame. Results of the election are scheduled to be announced on April 30. **MIKE ROZIER** (1981-83), the 1983 Heisman Trophy winner, was the most recent Cornhusker to be enshrined in the Hall of Fame, in 2006.

Thirteen former Nebraska players and six former Cornhusker coaches are enshrined.

PLAYERS: Ed Weir (1923-25), inducted 1951; George Sauer (1931-33), 1954; Guy Chamberlin (1914-15), 1962; Clarence Swanson (1918-21), 1973; Sam Francis (1934-36), 1977; Bobby Reynolds (1950-52), 1984; Forrest Behm (1938-40), 1988; Wayne Meylan (1956-67), 1991; Bob Brow (1961-63), 1993; Rich Glover (1970-72), 1995; Dave Rimington (1979-82), 1997; Johnny Rodgers (1970-72), 2000; Rozier.

COACHES: Fielding Yost (1898), 1951; Dana X. Bible (1929-36), 1951; Lawrence McCeney "Biff" Jones (1937-41), 1954; E.N. Robinson (1896-97), 1955; Bob Devaney (1962-72), 1981; Tom Osborne (1973-97), 1998.

Recruiting Notebook

QB prospects for 2010

by Sean Stevens

Nebraska has limited scholarships available for the 2010 recruiting class, but they will be likely to take one quarterback prospect.

A top prospect on the board is **BLAKE BELL** (6-6, 210) of Wichita, Kan. Bell has offers from around the nation, including Georgia, LSU, Miami, and Oklahoma. Nebraska has offered as well, and Bell enjoyed his junior day visit to Lincoln in February.

"After visiting Nebraska, they're definitely on top," Bell said at that time. "They really turned my head."

Since that trip, Bell has added offers and widened his options.

"I'm getting a feeling for all of the schools," Bell said. "If I really like a school and know that is the right choice then I might pull the trigger early. But right now I am open and checking all of the schools out."

A.J. DERBY (6-5, 218) of Iowa City, Iowa is also highly-recruited, with suitors such as Iowa, Alabama, Florida State and Stanford. Derby's father and older brother are Hawkeyes. Will he follow their lead?

"Right now, I wouldn't say any school has any kind of an edge," he said. "I know my dad played at Iowa and my brother plays there now, so they both give me a lot of inside information about the program. I'd say everybody is on equal footing right now though."

Derby also enjoyed his time at NU's junior day.

"It was sweet, a lot of fun," Derby said. "The people there were all real nice and enthusiastic about their tradition there. I really like coach Watson a lot."

AUSTIN HINDER (6-4, 185) of Steamboat Springs, Colo., is another possibility. He counts Alabama, Arizona State, Cal and Notre Dame among his many offers. Nebraska has made an impression, though.

"Nebraska is just a program with great tradition, and their fans are probably the best of any school in the country," Hinder said. "They're obviously one of the high-profile programs that I'm going to look at."

Hinder knows what he's looking for.

"I'm really looking toward schools that run a pro offense as well. No matter where I go I'll have to compete against good competition, but I definitely will check out the quality of competition I'd be facing."

During the 2008 recruiting cycle, Husker fans became familiar with the name Gabbert. Nebraska had a commitment that year from current Missouri quarterback **BLAINE GABBERT**. Blaine's little brother, **TYLER GABBERT** (6-0/185), is a top prospect for 2010. The relationship built with NU offensive coordinator **SHAWN WATSON** during Blaine's recruitment is carrying over with Tyler.

"I talk to coach Watson every other week. He wants me to come up for their spring game," said Gabbert. "I've known coach Watson for quite a while through my brother and I really like him."

Gabbert holds offers from Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas. Will his brother being at Missouri be a draw?

"It is not going to affect my decision whatsoever," he said. "I am Tyler Gabbert not Blaine Gabbert so I will make a name for myself wherever I go." **N**

SIDELINES

NEBRASKA ON HIS LIST

ROBERT MARVE, who started 11 games at quarterback for Miami last season, was looking to transfer in the spring, and according to the Tampa, Fla., Tribune, Nebraska was among the schools he was considering, along with South Florida, Michigan, Purdue, Texas Tech and UCLA. He will have to sit out the 2009 season and have two seasons of eligibility remaining. Rivals.com ranked the 6-foot-1, 210-pound Marve No. 8 in the nation among pro-style quarterbacks in the 2007 recruiting class.

OFF-SEASON TALK

DAVID OKU, whom Rivals.com rated the nation's No. 1 all-purpose running back in the 2009 recruiting class, is officially committed to playing at Tennessee in the fall. But for a while, he had Cornhusker fans speculating that he would be wearing scarlet and cream. Oku, who didn't sign a letter of intent in February, transferred from Carl Albert High School in Midwest City, Okla., to Lincoln, Neb., East High School for his final semester, living with the family of his girlfriend, who attends the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Surely, that meant he was interested in Nebraska – not. He signed a letter of intent with the Volunteers, and new coach Lane Kiffin, in early March, ending the speculation.

2010 Nebraska Commitment List (1)

Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Hometown (School)
Andrew Rodriguez	OT	6-6	300	Aurora, Neb. (Aurora)

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SPRING QUESTIONS

NOT THAT BLAKE LAWRENCE wanted to switch positions. He's fine playing linebacker. But he would be willing to help out the offense during the spring, if asked.

A couple of days before the first practice, he told Zac Lee, "if they need a good, old, right-handed quarterback who can run a little bit, go ahead and talk to Coach (Shawn) Watson," Lawrence said. "I could throw some balls in practice or something, whatever they need."

"If they need an extra arm, that would be fun."

Lawrence was a two-way player at Shawnee Mission (Kan.) West High School, the Kansas Gatorade High School Player of the Year as a senior, a safety and linebacker on defense and the quarterback on offense. "I miss playing quarterback," he said. "It was a great spot in high school."

His exchange with Lee, a quarterback, wasn't as off-the-wall as it might seem taken in context. Latravis Washington, a linebacker his first two seasons at Nebraska, is going to be a quarterback this spring. "It's something he wanted to try and we wanted to look at," coach Bo Pelini said.

"We're just going to see what he looks like."

Washington was an outstanding quarterback at Bayshore High in Bradenton, Fla. He drew recruiting attention for his skills at that position and attended Nebraska's quarterbacks camp. So Watson, the offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, has seen him at the position.

Whether he's still a quarterback at spring's end remains to be seen. But his position switch, the only one of note according to Pelini, raised some eyebrows at the pre-spring news conference.

"We're going to miss him as a linebacker," Lawrence said.

The experiment with Washington, initially anyway, is a footnote to what seems to be the most pressing question of the spring:

WHO WILL SUCCEED JOE GANZ?

At season's end, the answer was either-or, Lee or Patrick Witt. Now, Witt is gone, leaving Lee as the odds-on favorite going into the spring, in competition with redshirted freshman Kody Spano, true freshman Cody Green and, if the position switch holds, Washington.

Green, who enrolled for second semester, was going to miss some early practices because of a hip injury suffered while lifting during winter conditioning, according to Pelini.

"But he'll be out there pretty quick, we anticipate," Pelini said. "We just don't want to rush him because

it's something that if you get out there too quick, it'll just aggravate it."

On a scale of 1-to-10, the injury is a 1, according to doctors, said Pelini.

Lee, a junior, is the most experienced of the inexperienced group. Like Ganz, he's a competitor, according to senior center Jacob Hickman. "Zac's almost obnoxiously competitive, and Joe was too, to the point where they both get frustrated or whatever it may be," Hickman said.

"They're both athletic, very athletic guys, and I'm eager to see what Zac does out there."

Teammates talk about Lee's arm strength, athleticism and speed.

"He's one of the fastest guys on the team," offensive tackle Mike Smith said.

WHO WILL EMERGE AT LINEBACKER?

The competition at linebacker, like that at quarterback, will include mostly young and inexperienced players. Senior Phillip Dillard is listed as a returning starter, but he played in only nine games, with five starts, last season because of injury.

With Dillard hurt and Cody Glenn suspended, backups at the beginning of the season, such as Lawrence and Colton Koehler, had to step up for linebackers coach Mike Ekeler.

Will Compton, Sean Fisher, Alonzo Whaley and Micah Kreikemeier, all coming off redshirts, will be among those in the competition, as will sophomore Mathew May, a converted safety.



Blake Lawrence

The young linebackers “realize the opportunity is there for anybody right now,” Lawrence said. “It doesn’t matter what year you are, if you’re a fifth-year senior or second-year redshirt freshman. Going into the spring, there’s going to be guys that feel like they can grasp any amount of competition and take over a spot. That’s what I like about these freshmen. They’re not scared to compete, and they’re really going to help push the older guys, as well as continue to develop on their own.”

At linebacker, as well as throughout the defense, “we’re going to have a little more depth, some more options,” Pelini said. “Competition makes everybody better.

“At the end of the day, that’s what we’re looking for.”

WHICH REDSHIRTS WILL EMERGE?

Pelini was able to redshirt all of his first recruiting class, scholarship players as well as walk-ons, except Alfonzo Dennard, Mason Wald and Matt Holt. Fisher and Cameron Meredith played briefly in one early game apiece before injuries took them out of the picture.

Junior college transfer Ricky Henry, an offensive guard, also redshirted last season, though it appeared for a time he might play. He drew a lot of attention during pre-season practice.

“Ricky, he’s a tenacious guy,” said Hickman. “I’m sure, as most of you guys know, he’s got a great attitude, (is a) violent kid, and I really look forward to him getting into the scheme and getting used to all of us, getting in the chemistry of it. I’d like to see him out there. He’s a good player.

“And I think he’ll be a physical force for us.”

Though he has yet to play a down, Henry has already had an impact among the linemen. “He’s the real deal,” Smith said. “I think we all ought to take a little bit from Ricky. He provides us a little umph we need to get us through practice ... the whole offensive line can take something from him.”

Ndamukong Suh

WHO WILL LEAD THIS TEAM?

Last season, the coaches named captains game-to-game and then the team elected all-season captains at the end. Presumably, Pelini will do the same this season. But leaders will assert themselves during the spring. And senior nose tackle Ndamukong Suh is certain to be among them.

Suh understands that responsibility. “I’m more of a low-key guy. I don’t really speak up too much,” he said. “I just like ... like Bo said, he kind of wants me to be the face of the program. I just have to speak up that much more when that time is needed,” said Suh.

“I don’t think it’s every single practice. I don’t think it’s every single minute of the day or when we’re in football. At certain points and opportunities where you need to say something, where the coaches don’t always have to say it ... come to me, Barry (Turner), Zac (Lee).”

Hickman, another emerging leader, described Suh as a “big-time example leader. Nobody works harder in the weight room and stuff like that,” Hickman said. “I mean, he definitely does a good job of showing the young guys what you’re supposed to do.”

WILL THE OFFENSE CHANGE?

Speculation was that Nebraska might work on a no-huddle offense during the spring. The Cornhuskers used it effectively in their 45-35 victory against Kansas last season.

“I would like to see it because it’s definitely a different pace for the defense,” said Smith, who has increased his weight from 278 to 289 to better deal with bull-rushers.

Hickman, who heard “a bit” of talk about no-huddle, was less enthused. “I’m not a big fan of no-huddle. I don’t really like it,” he said.

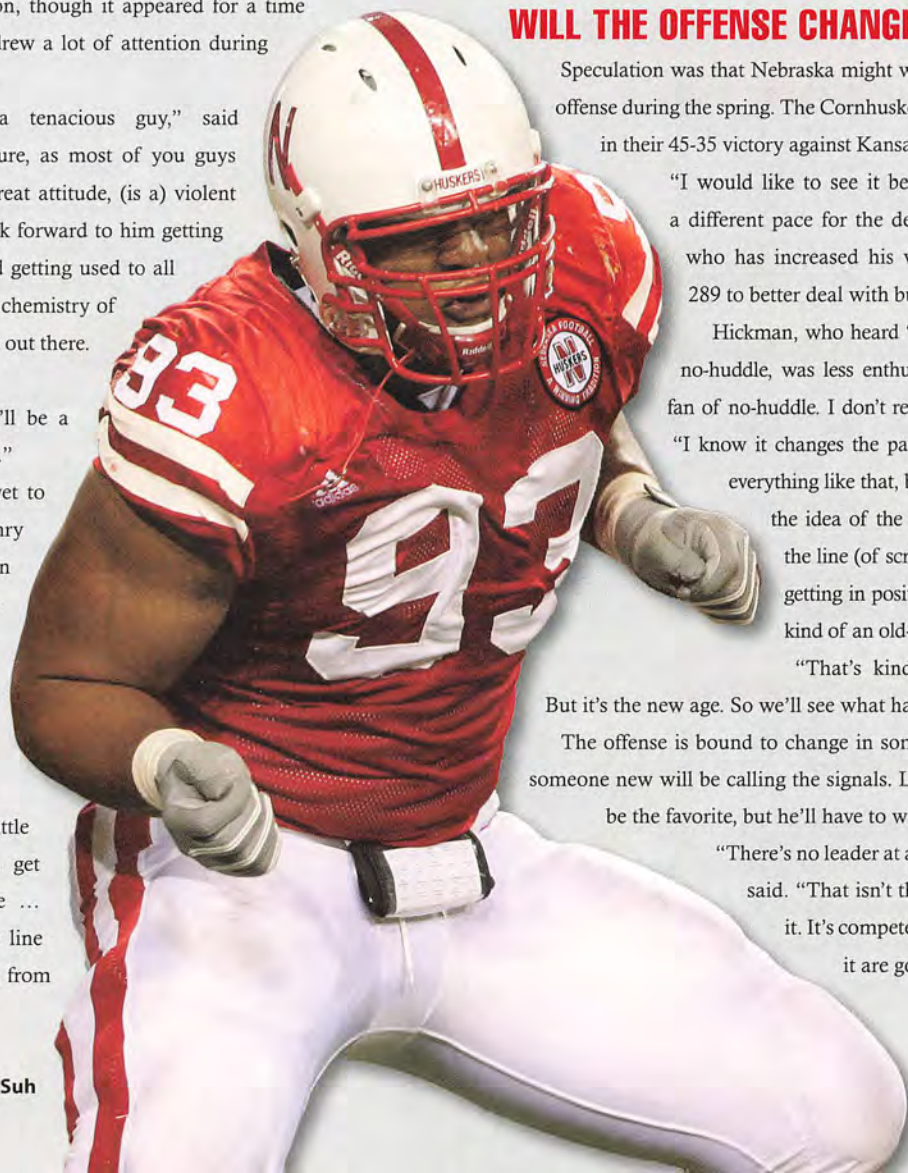
“I know it changes the pace of the game and everything like that, but I just kind of like the idea of the o-line coming up to the line (of scrimmage), everybody getting in positions ... I mean, it’s kind of an old-style (approach).

“That’s kind of my mentality.

But it’s the new age. So we’ll see what happens.”

The offense is bound to change in some way, considering someone new will be calling the signals. Lee would appear to be the favorite, but he’ll have to win the job.

“There’s no leader at any position,” Pelini said. “That isn’t the way we go about it. It’s compete. The guys that earn it are going to play.” **N**



SpringNotes



MISSING

Junior offensive tackle **JAIVORIO BURKES** won't be practicing immediately, if at all, though not because of the elevated blood pressure that sidelined him during pre-season practice. "That's just something we're monitoring, kind of, week to week," coach **BO PELINI** said, without elaborating.

Freshman quarterback **CODY GREEN** also will be held out. Even so, it won't set him back, said Pelini. "He's going to be in meetings and going through things. He's really a high school senior. He shouldn't be here anyway, so the way I look at it, it's a bonus that he's here at all."

Green is among three members of the 2009 recruiting class enrolled for second semester. The others are freshman wide receiver **ANTONIO BELL** and junior defensive back **DEJON GOMES**, a transfer from San Francisco City College – where quarterback **ZAC LEE** also played.

SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE

Originally, the team was scheduled to practice three times on Monday, but the first two Monday practices were replaced with Sunday night practices. The reason? Class conflicts.

"It's kind of an unfortunate situation that we have to deal with," Pelini said.

For one thing, had the team practiced on Monday, "we would have been without our starting center, trying to break in some new quarterbacks," he said.

For another, **NDAMUKONG SUH** would have been in class.

Practicing Friday, Saturday and Sunday isn't ideal, said Pelini. "But it's better than not having those guys out at practice. It's really a situation we face sometimes in the fall ... certain classes offered at certain times. It's difficult on us. It's the nature of it."

WEARING GREEN

Last spring, the quarterbacks wore green, no-contact jerseys, and they'll wear them again, at least in the beginning. "How we'll do it in the scrimmages, I'm not sure," Pelini said.

OFF THE TEAM

Pelini listed a handful of former scholarship recruits who are no longer on the team: **JOHN LEVORSON**, **JUSTIN ROGERS**, **MAJOR CULBERT** and **AUSTIN STAFFORD**. **NICK COVEY** has been placed on medical scholarship.

SIDELINES



Blue Back

Sophomore cornerback **ANTHONY BLUE** suffered a knee injury during winter conditioning a year ago and missed spring practice and the entire season. "I think his confidence in that knee is getting better, and the more he's out there, the more reps he gets, the better he's going to be," **BO PELINI** said.

"He's a talented kid. It takes time. I think he's 100 percent physically, but the mental aspect of that injury is what you've got to overcome, and that just takes time."

Orange or Red

A reporter acknowledged the "red" striped shirt **BO PELINI** wore to his pre-spring news conference, except that "I was told this was orange," he said of the stripes, eliciting laughter.

"I thought it was red when I got up this morning. It's kind of dark in my closet."

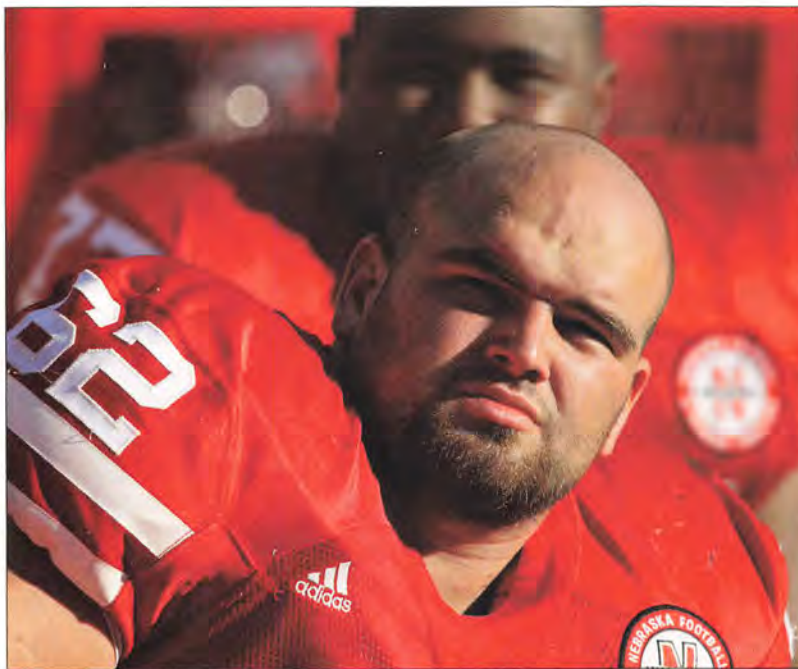
The reporter who acknowledged the "red" shirt compared it to a year ago.

"What color did I have on last year?" Pelini asked.

"Blue," the reporter replied.

"Pretty good," Pelini said to more laughter.

SpringNotes



HE'S BACK

ANDY CHRISTENSEN (above) is back after missing last season because of a suspension for off-the-field problems that have been resolved. "He's made a lot of progress," said Pelini. "He's not exactly where he wants to be or where we want him yet, but that takes time."

"He's done a good job of getting himself back in shape, back to where we want him to be. He's getting closer, and I think this spring will be big for him."

Christensen, an offensive guard, has started nine games during his injury-hampered career.

OFFENSIVE INVOLVEMENT

Pelini was asked if he would be more involved with the offense this season. "I'm going to call it this year," he said with a laugh. "Naw ... I told him (**SHAWN WATSON**) he's out (as offensive coordinator), I'm in. No, the offense is in good hands. 'Wats' and the offensive staff, that's as good as there is out there. I'm going to be that fly on the wall and the kind of guy that always ... you know, that always gives them ideas, tries to shoot holes in some of the things they're doing, the same way they do with us on defense. It's an interactive thing. Their input makes us better, and hopefully our input on the defensive side can make them better. As long as the communication's good."

"I think they've got a lot done in this off-season. Like I said, it's in good hands."

DEFENSE, OPENING UP

The defense will benefit from a year's experience. "We're going to kind of start grassroots with these guys, start over again," said Pelini. "I think they're going to have a little bit more knowledge to start with, which is going to allow us, hopefully, to get better at what we did last year, build on what we did last year, and it's going to enable us to become more multiple in time."

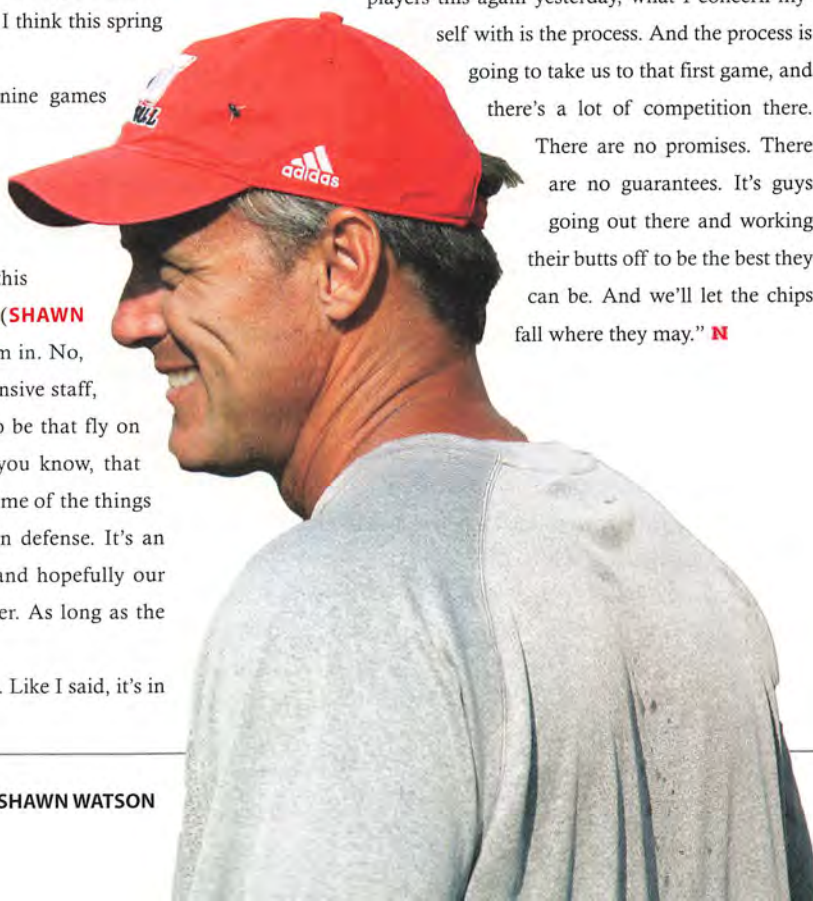
"I just think back to my situations where I've been there, when I've gone into year two, year three, going into year two here, I expect us to make a big jump."

DEPTH CHART

Who's No. 1? Who's No. 2? "I don't worry about two-deep. That's for you guys," Pelini told reporters during his pre-spring news conference. "I worry about who's going to be out there the first game, who's going to be out there when the thing kicks off. I don't get real caught up in the ones, the twos; we've got a lot of practices before we kick off that first game."

"Between now and then there's a lot that can happen. I told our players this again yesterday, what I concern myself with is the process. And the process is going to take us to that first game, and there's a lot of competition there."

There are no promises. There are no guarantees. It's guys going out there and working their butts off to be the best they can be. And we'll let the chips fall where they may." **N**



SHAWN WATSON

SpringNotes

REST OF THE BIG 12

Nebraska isn't alone in looking to identify a new quarterback during spring practice. But the Cornhuskers are in the minority on that count.

NORTH

COLORADO (5-7)

2009 Matchup: at Boulder, Nov. 27

Spring Camp: March 31-April 25

Cody Hawkins, the returning starter, will have to compete with Tyler Hansen.



IOWA STATE (2-10)

2009 Matchup: Lincoln, Oct. 24

Spring Camp: March 24-April 18

Austen Arnaud has a new, defensive-minded coach, in Paul Rhoads.



KANSAS (8-5)

2009 Matchup: at Lawrence, Nov. 14

Spring Camp: March 9-April 11

The Huskers will have to deal with rugged Todd Reesing one more time, in the venue where he directed a 76-39 Jayhawk victory two seasons ago.



KANSAS STATE (5-7)

2009 Matchup: Lincoln, Nov. 21

Spring Camp: April 6-May 2

Josh Freeman opted for the NFL draft instead of his senior season under new (old) coach Bill Snyder.



MISSOURI (10-4)

2009 Matchup: at Columbia, Oct. 8

Spring Camp: March 10-April 18

Chase Daniels' successor could be Blaine Gabbert, a name familiar to Cornhusker fans from recruiting in 2007. Oh yes, versatile Jeremy Maclin also won't be around to make whomever the Tigers' quarterback is look better.



SOUTH

BAYLOR (4-8)

2009 Matchup: at Waco, Oct. 31

Spring Camp: March 3-April 4

Coach Art Briles presents act II of the Robert Griffin offensive show.



OKLAHOMA (12-2)

2009 Matchup: Lincoln, Nov. 7

Spring Camp: March 3-April 11

Heisman Trophy winner and Associated Press Offensive Player of the Year Sam Bradford decided to stay for another season despite his NFL potential.



OKLAHOMA STATE (9-4)

2009 Matchup: DNP

Spring Camp: March 9-April 18

Zac Robinson is again one-third of the Cowboys' "triplets," along with running back Kendall Hunter and wide receiver Dez Bryant.



TEXAS (12-1)

2009 Matchup: DNP

Spring Camp: Feb. 27-April 5

Colt McCoy, the Walter Camp Award winner, is back for a final shot at a national title.



TEXAS A&M (4-8)

2009 Matchup: DNP

Spring Camp: March 26-April 18

Jerrod Johnson returns to direct an offense that ranked last in the conference in passing.



TEXAS TECH (11-2)

2009 Matchup: Lincoln, Oct. 17

Spring Camp: March 25-April 20

Adios Graham Harrell, the Johnny Unitas Golden Arm award winner, and unanimous All-America wide receiver Michael Crabtree with him.



RETURNERS

Returning players who started in 2008, not necessarily at listed position (2008) (career, if different)

OFFENSE

*Jacob Hickman, Sr., C (13) (23)
 *Alex Henery, Jr., PK (13) (25)
 *Mike Smith, Jr., T (12)
 Mike McNeill, Jr., TE (12)
 *Keith Williams, Jr., G (9)
 *Niles Paul, Jr., WR (4)
 Jaivorio Burkes, So., T (4) (7)
 Menelik Holt, Sr., WR (4)
 Dreu Young, Jr., TE (4)
 *Roy Helu, Jr., IB (2)
 *Quentin Castille, Jr., IB (1)
 Marcel Jones, So., T (1)
[Anthony Blue, So., CB, started twice in 2007; Andy Christensen, Sr., G, started three times in 2007, six times in 2006]

DEFENSE

*Ndamukong Suh, Sr., NT (13) (24)
 *Larry Asante, Sr., SS (12) (22)
 *Pierre Allen, Jr., DE (11)
 *Anthony West, Jr., CB (11)
 Matt O'Hanlon, Sr., FS (9)
 Eric Hagg, Jr., CB (10)
 *Rickey Thenarse, Sr., FS (5)
 Phillip Dillard, Sr., LB (5) (8)
 Lance Thorell, So., CB (5)
 *Blake Lawrence, Jr., LB (2)
 Prince Amukamara, Jr., CB (3)
 Barry Turner, Sr., DE (2) (13)
 *Colton Koehler, Sr., LB (1)
 Matt Holt, So., LB (1)

THE DEPARTED

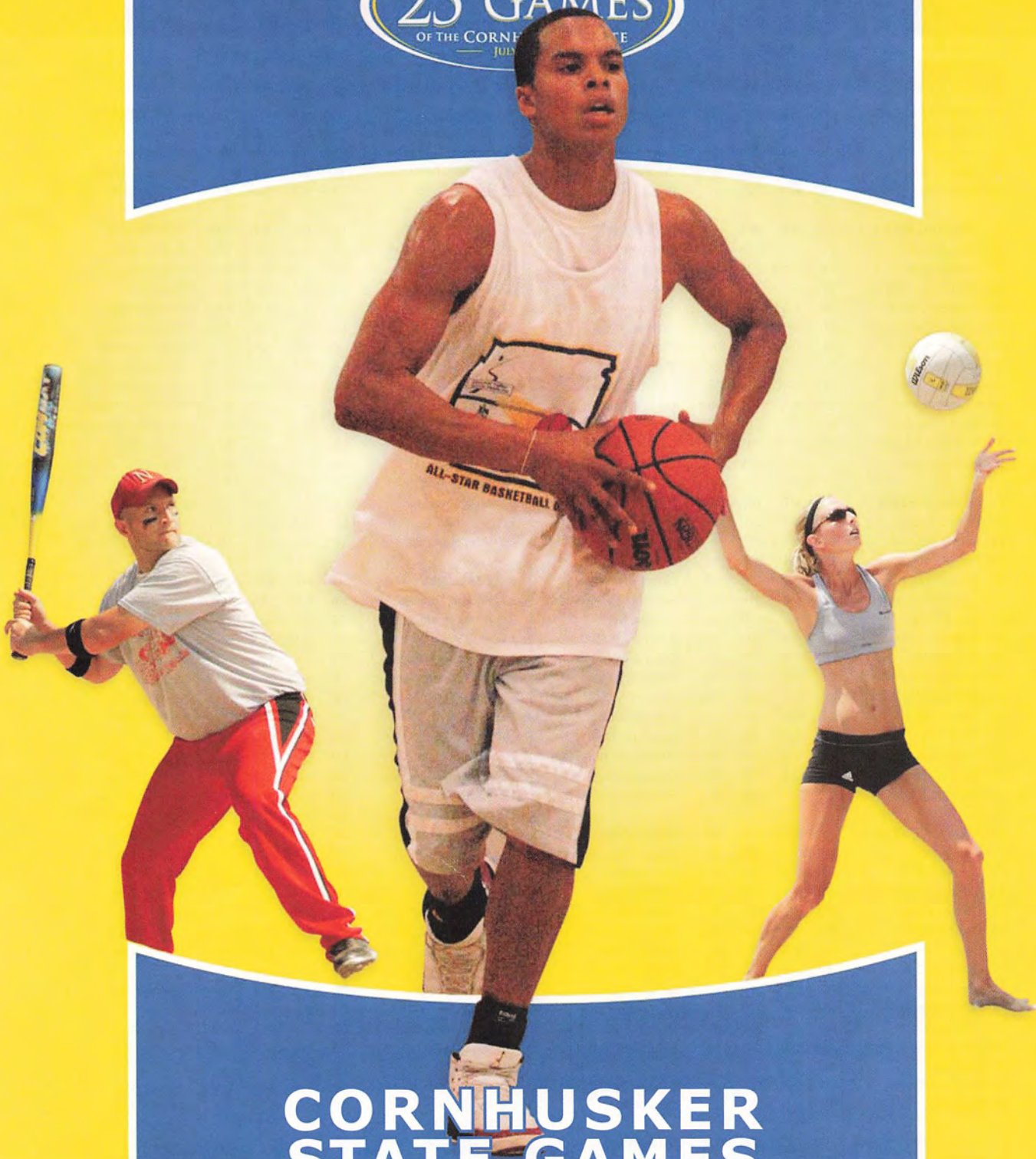
Departed players who started in 2008

OFFENSE

*Joe Ganz, QB (13) (16)
 *Nate Swift, WR (13) (29)
 *Matt Slauson, RG (13) (35)
 *Todd Peterson, WR (12) (17)
 Marlon Lucky, IB (11) (29)
 *Lydon Murtha, RT (9) (23)
 Mike Huff, LG (4) (23)
 Hunter Teafatiller, TE (2)

DEFENSE

*Ty Steinkuhler, DT (13) (21)
 *Zach Potter, DE (13) (24)
 *Armando Murillo, CB (12) (24)
 *Dan Titchener, P (11) (37)
 Cody Glenn, LB (9)
 *Tyler Wortman, LB (6)
 Jake Wesch, P (2)
 *started Gator Bowl game



CORNHUSKER STATE GAMES

JULY 17–26, 2009

CornhuskerStateGames.com

SpringNotes

NEBRASKA SPRING ROSTER BY POSITION

#	QUARTERBACKS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
17	Green, Cody	QB	6-4	215	Fr.	Dayton, Texas
3	Lee, Zac	QB	6-2	210	Jr.	San Francisco, Calif.
7	Spano, Kody	QB	6-2	215	RFr.	Stephenville, Texas
15	Washington, Latravis**	QB	6-3	225	Jr.	Bradenton, Fla.

#	RUNNING BACKS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
30	Hays, Mike*	FB	6-1	240	So.	Papillion, Neb.
48	Legate, Tyler	FB	5-10	225	RFr.	Neligh, Neb.
45	Makovicka, Justin	FB	6-1	230	Jr.	Ulysses, Neb.
37	Thomsen, Kevin	FB	6-2	235	So.	Elkhorn, Neb.
19	Castille, Quentin**	IB	6-1	235	Jr.	LaPorte, Texas
10	Helu Jr., Roy**	IB	6-0	215	Jr.	Danville, Calif.
28	Jones, Austin	IB	5-10	210	So.	Aurora, Colo.
32	Mendoza, Marcus	IB	5-10	185	So.	Houston, Texas
29	Okafor, Collins	IB	6-1	225	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
14	Ward, Lester	IB	6-3	215	RFr.	Brenham, Texas
35	Makovicka, Jordan	RB	5-10	195	RFr.	Ulysses, Neb.
25	Wallace, Jeremy	RB	6-1	235	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.

#	OFFENSIVE LINE	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
66	Barrett, Cruz	OL	6-4	310	Jr.	Daytona Beach, Fla.
72	Burkes, Jaivorio**	OL	6-5	295	Jr.	Phoenix, Ariz.
58	Caputo, Mike*	OL	6-1	275	So.	Omaha, Neb.
77	Choi, Seung Hoon	OL	6-2	295	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb.
62	Christensen, Andy**	OL	6-3	310	Sr.	Bennington, Neb.
74	Henry, Ricky	OL	6-4	300	Jr.	Omaha, Neb.
67	Hickman, Jacob***	OL	6-4	295	Sr.	Bakersfield, Calif.
73	Jones, D.J.*	OL	6-5	315	Jr.	Omaha, Neb.
78	Jones, Marcel*	OL	6-7	310	So.	Phoenix, Ariz.
54	McShane, Max	OL	6-6	305	RFr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
63	Meyer, Derek	OL	6-5	315	Sr.	Campbell, Neb.
65	Smith, Mike**	OL	6-6	290	Jr.	Las Vegas, Nev.
79	Thompson, Brandon	OL	6-6	300	RFr.	The Woodlands, Texas
59	Thorson, Brian	OL	6-3	290	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
68	Williams, Keith**	OL	6-5	320	Jr.	Florissant, Mo.

#	WIDE RECEIVERS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
2	Bell, Antonio	WR	6-2	180	Fr.	Daytona Beach, Fla.
1	Brooks, Chris*	WR	6-2	215	Sr.	St. Louis, Mo.
82	Cammack, Wes***	WR	5-11	200	Sr.	DeWitt, Neb.
6	Cooper, Khiry	WR	6-2	195	RFr.	Shreveport, La.
46	Dixon, Taylor	WR	5-11	190	RFr.	Wauneta, Neb.
16	Dostal, John	WR	5-9	175	Fr.	Papillion, Neb.
11	Gilleylen, Curenski*	WR	6-0	220	So.	Leander, Texas
8	Henry, Will**	WR	6-5	215	Jr.	El Paso, Texas
18	Holt, Menelik***	WR	6-4	220	Sr.	San Diego, Calif.
85	Hyland, KC	WR	6-6	205	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb.
9	Lester, Ben	WR	5-10	170	So.	Tecumseh, Neb.
21	Marlowe, Tim	WR	5-10	175	RFr.	Youngstown, Ohio
26	Osborne, Steven	WR	6-4	195	RFr.	Garland, Texas
24	Paul, Niles**	WR	6-1	215	Jr.	Omaha, Neb.

#	TIGHT ENDS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
83	Bechtold, Damon	TE	6-4	235	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
81	Cotton, Ben	TE	6-6	240	RFr.	Ames, Iowa
80	Hill, Ryan*	TE	6-3	250	So.	Arvada, Colo.
88	Martin, Jay	TE	6-2	225	So.	Waverly, Neb.
86	McClure, Mychael	TE	6-5	235	RFr.	Wisner, Neb.
44	McNeill, Mike**	TE	6-4	240	Jr.	Kirkwood, Mo.
25	Reed, Kyler	TE	6-3	225	RFr.	Shawnee, Kan.
49	Young, Dreu**	TE	6-4	245	Jr.	Cozad, Neb.

#	KICKERS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
27	Damkroger, Jonathon	P/PK	6-1	185	So.	Firth, Neb.
90	Henery, Alex**	PK	6-2	175	Jr.	Omaha, Neb.
20	Kunalic, Adi**	PK	6-0	190	Jr.	Fort Worth, Texas
96	Mahe, Brett	PK/P	6-0	170	RFr.	Kearney, Neb.

#	LINEBACKERS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
42	Camarata, Joseph	LB	5-10	225	RFr.	Overland Park, Kan.
51	Compton, Will	LB	6-2	220	RFr.	Bonne Terre, Mo.
52	Dillard, Phillip***	LB	6-1	240	Sr.	Tulsa, Okla.
42	Fisher, Sean	LB	6-6	230	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
49	Foxhoven, Tanner	LB	6-3	225	RFr.	Crofton, Neb.
41	Grove, Thomas**	LB	6-2	225	Jr.	Arlington, Neb.
35	Holt, Matt*	LB	6-0	200	So.	Lee's Summit, Mo.
54	Koehler, Colton*	LB	6-1	230	Sr.	Harvard, Neb.
44	Kreikemeier, Micah	LB	6-3	215	RFr.	West Point, Neb.
40	Lawrence, Blake**	LB	6-3	220	Jr.	Shawnee Mission, Kan.
61	Manninger, Matt	LB	6-1	220	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
36	May, Mathew*	LB	6-1	210	So.	Imperial, Neb.
65	McDermott, Colin	LB	6-2	240	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
67	Meginnis, Sam	LB	6-2	220	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb.
71	Stoddard, Graham	LB	6-2	225	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb.
45	Whaley, Alonzo	LB	6-1	225	RFr.	Madisonville, Texas

#	DEFENSIVE BACKS	>>>	HT.	WT.	YR.	HOMETOWN
23	Thorell, Lance*	CB	6-1	195	So.	Loomis, Neb.
21	Amukamara, Prince	CB	6-1	200	Jr.	Glendale, Ariz.
14	Blue, Anthony*	CB	5-10	185	So.	Cedar Hill, Texas
15	Dennard, Alfonso*	CB	5-10	190	So.	Rochelle, Ga.
28	Hagg, Eric**	CB	6-2	205	Jr.	Peoria, Ariz.
5	West, Anthony**	CB	6-0	205	Jr.	San Diego, Calif.
39	Blatchford, Justin	DB	6-1	195	RFr.	Ponca, Neb.
20	Dean, Jase	DB	6-0	185	RFr.	Bridgeport, Neb.
29	Gomes, Dejon	DB	6-0	190	Jr.	Hayward, Calif.
12	Osborne, Courtney	DB	6-3	185	RFr.	Garland, Texas
13	Smith, P.J.	DB	6-2	205	RFr.	River Ridge, La.
22	Wald, Mason*	DB	5-11	195	So.	Birmingham, Ala.
95	Allen, Pierre**	DE	6-5	265	Jr.	Denver, Colo.
70	Anderson, Kenny	DE	6-2	240	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
92	Fahie, Tyrone	DE	6-3	255	Jr.	Virginia Beach, Va.
39	Glassman, Dan	DE	6-4	250	Jr.	Omaha, Neb.
85	Klingelhoefer, Faron	DE	6-2	255	RFr.	Amherst, Neb.
75	Lingenfelter, Luke	DE	6-4	255	So.	Plainview, Neb.
66	McDermott, Conor	DE	6-2	240	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
96	Meredith, Cameron	DE	6-4	260	RFr.	Santa Ana, Calif.
89	Santin, Jonathon	DE	6-3	230	So.	Fullerton, Neb.
99	Turner, Barry***	DE	6-3	265	Sr.	Antioch, Tenn.
17	Williams, Josh	DE	6-4	245	RFr.	Denton, Texas
47	Yancy, William	DE	6-4	245	So.	Glendale, Ariz.
58	Jackson, Justin	DL	6-3	270	RFr.	Roca, Neb.
68	Molek, Josh	DL	6-3	245	RFr.	Omaha, Neb.
55	Steinkuhler, Baker	DL	6-6	295	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb.
50	Toailoa, Quentin	DL	6-4	300	RFr.	Highland, Calif.
94	Crick, Jared*	DT	6-6	285	So.	Cozad, Neb.
80	Harvey, David	DT	6-4	275	Sr.	LaPlata, Md.
63	Martin, Ben*	DT	6-4	260	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb.
90	Moore, Terrence*	DT	6-3	285	So.	New Orleans, La.
93	Suh, Ndamukong***	DT	6-4	300	Sr.	Portland, Ore.
43	Moravec, Brent	FS	6-0	185	RFr.	Grand Island, Neb.
4	Asante, Larry**	S	6-1	215	Sr.	Alexandria, Va.
8	Cassidy, Austin	S	6-1	210	So.	Lincoln, Neb.
16	Ebke, Jim	S	6-0	215	So.	Lincoln, Neb.
33	O'Hanlon, Matt***	S	5-11	200	Sr.	Bellevue, Neb.
3	Thenarse, Rickey***	S	6-0	205	Sr.	Los Angeles, Calif.
24	Watson, Adam	S	6-0	195	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb.

* Letters earned



Help amidst frustration.



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NEXT IN LINE?

BY STEVEN M. SIPPLE

The news surfaced Feb. 22, a jolt to Nebraska football fans. Quarterback Patrick Witt, a sophomore-to-be, had decided to leave the team even though he seemed in prime position to succeed Joe Ganz as the Huskers' starter in 2009.

Witt's unexpected departure elicited confusion among Big Red fans. Why now? Why at all? Answers would soon begin to reveal themselves. But there was another pressing question:

Is Zac Lee ready to take over the job?

With Witt out of the picture, Lee, a junior-to-be from San Francisco, appears to be the clear front-runner in the race to replace Ganz. Lee has been in the program since January of 2007, following a highly successful season at San Francisco City College. His chief competition will come from a pair of freshmen – Kody Spano, who operated the scout team last fall as a redshirt, and ballyhooed recruit Cody Green, who arrived on campus in January after graduating early from high school in Dayton, Texas. In addition, true freshman Taylor Martinez of Corona, Calif., could figure into the mix once he arrives this coming summer for pre-season drills.

If nothing else, Lee's experience running Nebraska offensive coordinator Shawn Watson's somewhat complex system gives him an advantage over the young quarterbacks on the roster. That said, Lee still has a lot to learn, Watson said. After all, Lee appeared in only two games last season (victories against New Mexico State and Kansas State), completing 1-of-2 passes for five yards against the Aggies and rushing twice for 17 yards against Kansas State.

According to Husker head coach Bo Pelini, Witt and Lee battled "back and forth" throughout last season for the No. 2 quarterback job behind Ganz. But it was Witt who entered the Gator Bowl after Ganz was temporarily knocked woozy in the fourth quarter. It was Witt who received the lion's share of the game action behind Ganz last season. And remember, it was Witt who started for the White team over Lee (Ganz started for the Red squad) in last year's Red-White Spring Game.

As Nebraska's 2009 spring practice season approached – it begins March 25 and ends April 18 – Husker officials shut off Lee from media interviews. It was probably a wise move considering all the attention

(read: drama) created by Witt's departure in the middle of the spring semester. Ganz, in a March 12 interview with reporters following his workout for NFL scouts in Lincoln, said he's advised Lee to try to remain grounded and to pay no mind to the inherent scrutiny that comes with playing quarterback in a high-profile program.

"I've been telling him not to get too big of a head," Ganz said. "Just don't listen to anything people say. You know what got you here. You know how hard you have to work to stay here at this level. He's learning. He's still young."

The 6-foot-4, 220-pound Witt appeared in five games last season and completed 6-of-8 passes for 48 yards. He rushed four times for 20 yards and a touchdown. He has a strong presence in the pocket, good arm and excellent intelligence (he carries a 4.0 grade-point average at NU on a 4.0 scale). On the surface, Witt's situation with the Huskers had seemed full of promise. However, according to The Lincoln

“YOU HAVE
to compete and win that job.
Coach Pelini and Coach
Watson are never going to
hand anybody anything.”

FORMER HUSKER QB
JOE GANZ

Journal Star, Witt feared the coaching staff strongly favored Lee and wondered if he'd get a fair shake in the competition.

The Journal Star, citing anonymous sources, reported Feb. 24 that Witt sought assurance from Nebraska coaches that they would name the starting quarterback at the end of spring practice. That way, if Witt wasn't named the starter, he presumably could arrange to transfer, or at least evaluate his options. Pelini informed Witt it was highly unlikely that he would release Witt from his scholarship if Witt made such a request at the end of spring drills. Pelini loathed the idea of Witt going through spring practices while considering a transfer. So,

NEXT IN LINE?

Pelini essentially forced Witt's hand before the start of spring drills. Hence the split.

"You have to compete and win that job," Ganz said. "Coach Pelini and Coach Watson are never going to hand anybody anything."

Witt has remained mum – as have Pelini and Watson – regarding exactly why Witt decided to leave. At this point, Nebraska coaches simply want to push forward with the quarterbacks on hand. This much is certain: Whoever emerges as the Huskers' starting QB in 2009 will be inexperienced at the major-college level.

Lee's college experience consists of the 2006 season at San Francisco City College, where he threw for 3,400-plus yards and 35 touchdowns, with only five interceptions, while completing 64 percent of his passes. He helped lead his team to a 10-2 record and an appearance in the California junior college title game. Lee was ranked as the nation's top junior college quarterback by Rivals.com and received strong recruiting interest from Oklahoma, Fresno State and Mississippi State.

Former Nebraska head coach Bill Callahan and ex-Husker assistants Jay Norvell and Dennis Wagner all played roles in recruiting Lee, according to City College head coach George Rush.

"We initially recommended Zac, and Nebraska was intrigued right away," Rush recalled.

A football and baseball standout at St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco, Lee attracted only one Division I-A football scholarship offer coming out of high school – from Army. He has said he thinks football teams might have been leery of him ultimately choosing to play baseball, as he was a star center fielder.

"I just didn't get the offers I was hoping or expecting to get," he said.

So, Rush welcomed Lee to San Francisco City College, a traditional powerhouse that also produced former Nebraska wide receiver Maurice Purify and former Husker offensive tackle Cornealius Fuamatu-Thomas.

Lee is the son of Bob Lee, who played quarterback for 12 seasons in the NFL (1969-80), spending time with the Vikings, Falcons and Rams. Zac's field savvy comes from years of being around the game, Rush said.

"Zac has great leadership skills and fabulous arm strength," Rush said. "He manages the game well – he knows when to check in and out of plays, and he's an excellent 'team' guy. I think he'll be a difference-maker."

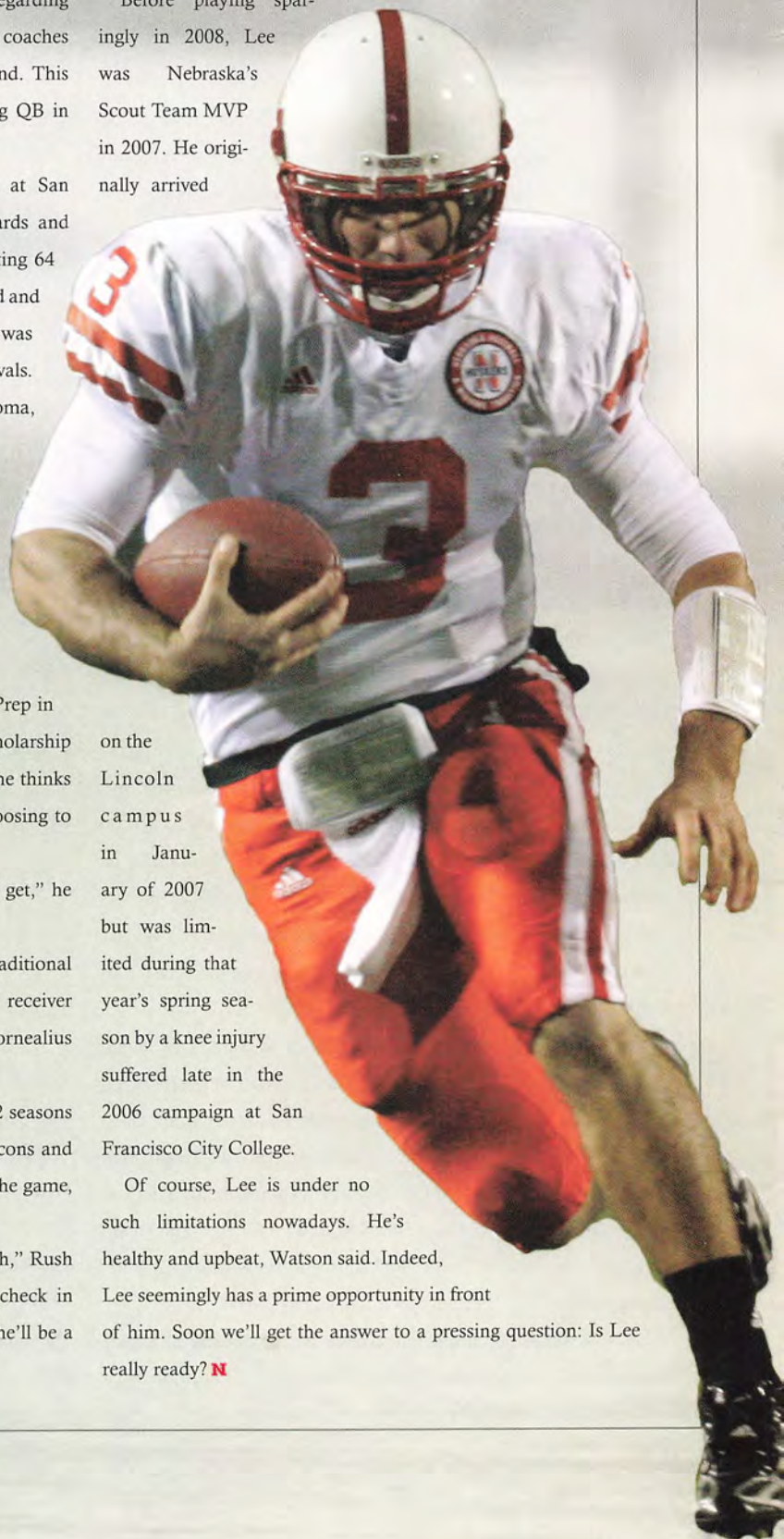
Coaches and teammates always seem to note Lee's arm strength and mobility – but especially his arm strength.

"What I've seen, he's got a ridiculously strong arm," ex-Nebraska wideout Nate Swift said last spring. "He can make any throw."

Before playing sparingly in 2008, Lee was Nebraska's Scout Team MVP in 2007. He originally arrived

on the Lincoln campus in January of 2007 but was limited during that year's spring season by a knee injury suffered late in the 2006 campaign at San Francisco City College.

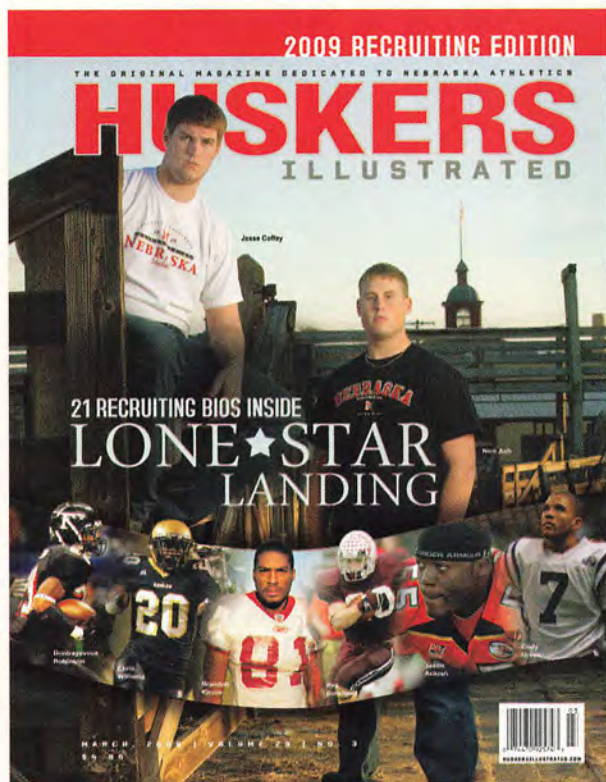
Of course, Lee is under no such limitations nowadays. He's healthy and upbeat, Watson said. Indeed, Lee seemingly has a prime opportunity in front of him. Soon we'll get the answer to a pressing question: Is Lee really ready? **N**



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MIKE NESSETH

BY TERRY DOUGLASS

Nesseth returns to the bullpen

Groomed in the offseason to take over as Nebraska's ace starting pitcher, Mike Nesseth and the Cornhusker coaching staff agree that the sophomore is back where he belongs in the bullpen.

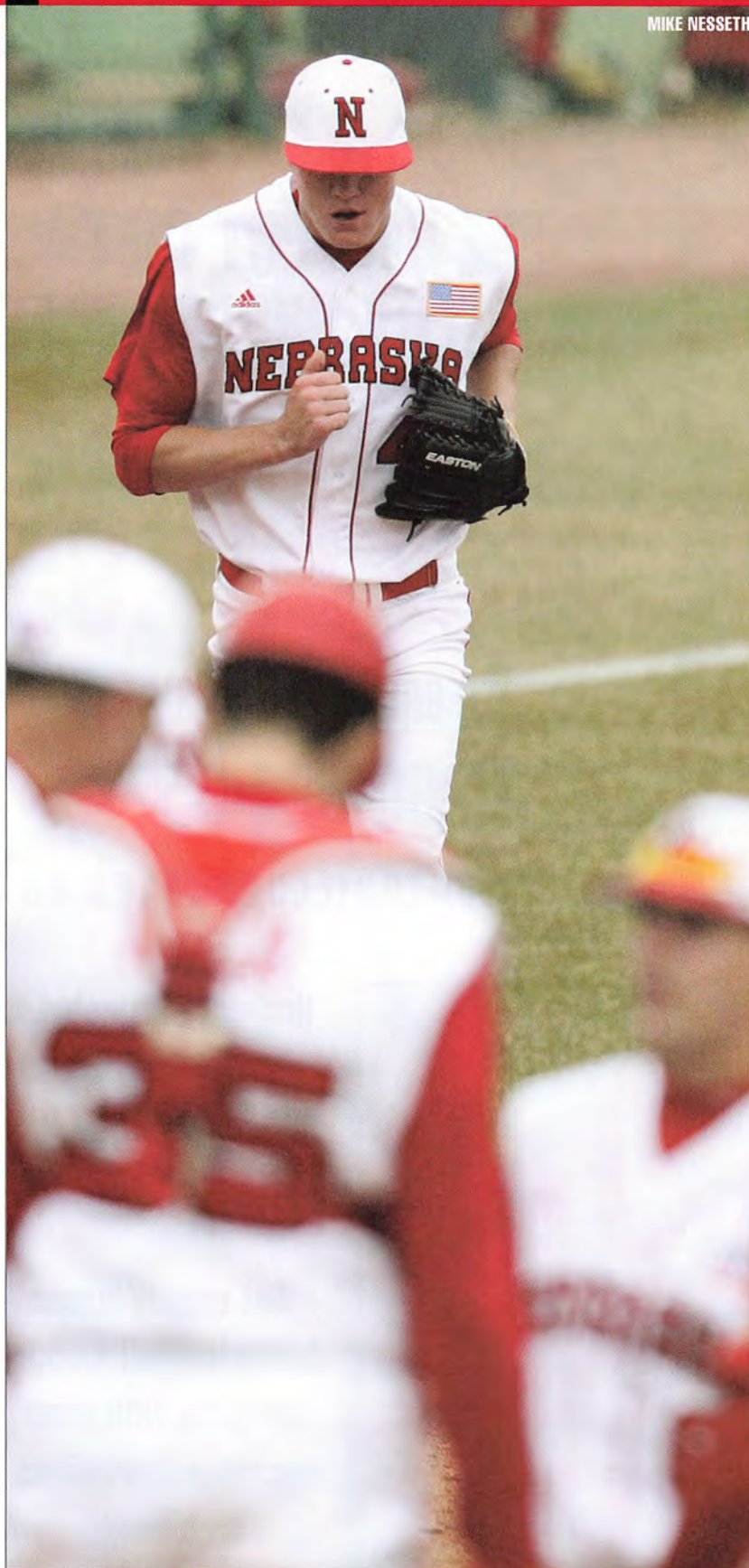
While Nesseth was solid in the early season as Nebraska's so-called "Friday-night guy" — he was 2-1 in four starts with a 3.00 ERA, allowing 18 hits and striking out 29 in 27 innings pitched — head coach Mike Anderson and pitching coach Eric Newman ultimately determined the hard-throwing right-hander could help the Huskers more in the closer role.

And that's just fine with Nesseth.

"I'd love to stay in the bullpen," Nesseth said. "Obviously, I'm going to pitch whenever they tell me to pitch, but I think if it works out best for the team with me as the closer, I'd like to stay there."

The emergence of Casey Hauptman and Jordan Rouldes as starting pitchers, coupled with Nebraska's early season bullpen struggles and an elbow injury to projected closer Erik Anderson, made Nesseth's move back to the bullpen a no-brainer, Newman said.

"When we evaluated it, Mike was obviously our best starting pitcher, but from a team standpoint, we really needed somebody at the end of the game that could get it done,"



Newman said. "Mike had shown last year that he was that guy and able to do that."

"So when we realized that (finishing games) had become a little bit of a problem, it became a pretty easy decision."

Newman said he expects Nesseseth to serve as the closer for the Huskers for the remainder of the season, barring any unforeseen circumstances.

"He doesn't look at this as a demotion, and I certainly don't, either," Newman said of Nesseseth. "I look at it this way: We were putting the best closer in the conference back into his natural role."

It was a role Nesseseth was clearly comfortable in last year as a freshman. The 6-foot-5, 220-pounder from Windom, Minn., made 27 relief appearances in 2008, recording four saves and striking out 53 batters in 37 2/3 innings, while opponents batted just .201 against him.

"I think the closer role best suits me," Nesseseth said. "I think that's where I fit best last year and that's where I feel the best, probably just because that's where I've had more experience out of the bullpen."

The value of Nesseseth as a reliever became quickly evident. In the first series after the switch was made, Nesseseth earned a win for a two-inning stint out of the bullpen that helped Nebraska rally for a 7-4 victory on March 18 to split a two-game set at then-No. 16 Arkansas.

Nesseseth said the change in approach of going from a starter to the closer actually works in his favor.

"Since I was in the bullpen last year, I knew what it was all about and the mindset is actually an exciting change just because you don't have to try and maintain any arm strength," Nesseseth said. "In the bullpen, you can go out there and throw as hard as you can and throw strikes. You're only going to be out there for an inning or two — maybe three — so you can really let it go."

There's no doubt in Nesseseth's ability to do just that. Newman said Nesseseth features a 95 mph fastball with an 87 mph slider.

"But beyond that, Mike is seasoned,"

Newman said. "He's been in this role before and it's a difficult role to fill."

"To be a closer, you either need someone who has been through the wars before or someone who just has a tremendously competitive heart. Mike has both of them."

2009 BASEBALL SCHEDULE (15-8-1, 3-3 Big 12)

2/20	at Louisiana-Lafayette, 4-3 (W) 15inn
2/21	at Louisiana-Lafayette, 9-8 (W)
2/21	at Louisiana-Lafayette, 1-2 (L)
2/22	at Louisiana-Lafayette, 5-5 (T)
2/25	North Dakota, 10-6 (W)
2/27	vs. Missouri State, 14-12 (W)
2/28	vs. St. Mary's, 5-7 (L) 10
2/28	at Sam Houston State, 8-1 (W)
3/1	vs. Missouri State, 2-3 (L)
3/4	South Dakota State, 11-2 (W)
3/6	Cal State Northridge, 9-3 (W)
3/7	Cal State Northridge (DH), 11-5 (W)
3/7	Cal State Northridge (DH), 12-6 (W)
3/8	Cal State Northridge, 8-2 (W)
3/14	at Texas Tech, 8-16 (L)
3/14	at Texas Tech, 10-1 (W)
3/15	at Texas Tech, 3-10 (L)
3/17	at Arkansas, 3-7 (L)
3/18	at Arkansas, 7-4 (W)
3/20	Oklahoma State, 11-4 (W)
3/21	Oklahoma State, 12-4 (W)
3/22	Oklahoma State, 3-6 (L)
3/24	Northern Colorado, 14-13 (W)
3/25	Northern Colorado, 7-10 (L)
3/27	at Oklahoma, 6:30 p.m.
3/28	at Oklahoma, 2 p.m.
3/29	at Oklahoma, 1 p.m.
3/31	at Wichita State, 7 p.m.
4/3	Kansas State, 6:05 p.m.
4/4	Kansas State, 2:05 p.m.
4/5	Kansas State, 1:05 p.m.
4/7	Creighton, 6:05 p.m.
4/9	Texas, 6:05 p.m.
4/10	Texas, 6:05 p.m.
4/11	Texas, 1:05 p.m.
4/14	Iowa, 6:05 p.m.
4/17	at Texas A&M, 6:35 p.m.
4/18	at Texas A&M, 6:35 p.m.
4/19	at Texas A&M, 1:05 p.m.
4/21	at Creighton, 6:30 p.m.
4/24	at Kansas, 6 p.m.
4/25	at Kansas, 6 p.m.
4/26	at Kansas, 1 p.m.
4/28	New Mexico, 6:05 p.m.
4/29	New Mexico, 1:35 p.m.
5/1	Missouri, 6:05 p.m.
5/2	Missouri, 2:05 p.m.
5/3	Missouri, 1:05 p.m.
5/8	Cal State Bakersfield, 6:05 p.m.
5/9	Cal State Bakersfield, 2:05 p.m.
5/10	Cal State Bakersfield, 1:05 p.m.
5/12	Creighton, 7 p.m.
5/15	Baylor, 6:05 p.m.
5/16	Baylor, 2:05 p.m.
5/17	Baylor, 1:05 p.m.
5/20-24	at Big 12 Championship
5/29-6/1	at NCAA Regionals
6/5-8	at NCAA Super Regionals
6/13-24	at NCAA College World Series

FOLAND FINDS CALLING

HEIDI FOLAND felt the call to be a softball player before she got the call that made her a Cornhusker.

Nebraska coach **RHONDA REVELLE** tells the story as a series of fortuitous events. While watching fall high school games two years ago, she happened to spot Foland — a total unknown to the coach — making plays college players make.

After discussing with her the possibility of hitting softballs at Nebraska, Revelle convinced the Grand Island prospect — who was taking visits to schools for basketball — to change her sports allegiance.

Foland believes something greater than Revelle's persuasive arguments got her to Lincoln.

"My heart was telling me to go play softball," Foland said. "That love for basketball was still there, but I felt like God was sending me in a direction of softball. It's been my greatest decision I've made so far."

In a "creepy" set of circumstances, Foland said she made up her mind to try softball only hours before Revelle first called her prep coach. She had been in talks with schools like Nebraska-Kearney and Nebraska-Omaha, as well as New Mexico, for a basketball scholarship.

Fast forward two years, and the decision still looks inspired. Foland played in all 53 of Nebraska's games as a freshman and took over the third base job. This year she leads the team in almost every major power category. Not bad for someone who spent more of her time on lay-ups than line drives through high school.

Revelle said the natural talent has always been there for Foland. The next step is getting her to believe she can be a power hitter and to work on her technique.

"That athleticism," Revelle said, "is starting to be developed and come out."

So is Foland's confidence. The sophomore scrapped her batting style from last season and committed to an approach that came naturally and liberated her from worrying about small details. **N**

by Evan Bland

Men's Basketball

DOC SADLER

BY BRIAN ROSENTHAL

Sadler hits recruiting trail

When the Nebraska men's basketball team finished its season with a loss at New Mexico in the first round of the National Invitation Tournament, the Huskers left early

the next morning on a flight back to Lincoln.

They left without their coach, Doc Sadler. He had a different itinerary.

Sadler immediately hit the recruiting trail, primarily in search of a junior college player or two who might fill a much-needed difference-maker role on next year's team.

Upgrading talent, Sadler said, is necessary if the Huskers are to take a step forward in the ultra-competitive Big 12 Conference.

"You've got to have a pro," said Sadler, who's 55-40 in three seasons at Nebraska. "In this league, one pro will give you a chance. With two pros, you can compete in the top four."

Nebraska, with no players headed to the NBA any time soon, completed an 18-13 season, with the first-round NIT loss. The Huskers went 8-8 in the Big 12, their first non-losing conference record since they went 10-6 in 1999.

Sadler led a team that was the shortest in NCAA Division I. His top recruit, guard Robert Sallie, was victim of a Big 12 Conference rule and a Nebraska admissions error, and landed at Memphis, where he scored 35 points in the first round of the NCAA



Tournament. Sadler's targeted big man, Brian Diaz, didn't arrive on campus until January because he was late meeting Nebraska's admission standards. Diaz redshirted. And freshman Bear Jones, penciled in to give Nebraska a scoring boast, had season-ending foot surgery before Christmas.

"If you would've told me with everything that's happened in this program that we'd be sitting here in the third-best conference in the country at 8-8, that tells you the guys came and played hard every day," Sadler said.

By the end of the season, though, the game-to-game grind against bigger Big 12 foes appeared to have taken its toll. The already offense-challenged Huskers had a difficult time getting shots to fall, shooting less than 40 percent in seven of their final 10 games. A Nebraska team that had been holding its own on the boards throughout the season finally succumbed, allowing teams to hold decisive advantages in rebounding. To wit: Baylor forward Kevin Rogers had 20 rebounds to Nebraska's team total of 18 in the Big 12 Tournament.

"This team overachieved," Sadler said. "They gave Nebraska fans more than they had. Each and every night they had to do it, or we wouldn't have been in any games."

Nebraska was within a play or two of upsetting league champion Kansas. The Huskers lost in overtime at home to Oklahoma State and to Texas A&M on a last-second shot.

The Huskers also defeated Creighton on a last-second shot, held off a last-second shot to defeat Texas and escaped with a narrow win at Colorado. In all, Nebraska was 6-6 in games decided by six points or fewer.

OK, but not great.

"I think we've got an attitude now that we're not just happy to be in the game," Sadler said. "We have an attitude now that if we go to Lawrence, Kansas we think we can win. If we go to Oklahoma, we think we can win. We've developed that mindset. Now, we've got to take another step."

That begins with recruiting.

Sadler signed four players in November, including one, 6-11 center Vander Joaquim, who will attend junior college. That leaves incoming freshmen Reyes Gallegos (6-2 guard), Brandon Ubel (6-9 forward) and

Christian Standhardinger (6-8 forward). Standhardinger is not yet eligible.

Those three players put Nebraska at the 13-player scholarship limit for next season, but Sadler continues to search for immediate help from junior college players and may sign a couple of players in the spring's late signing period.

Among the candidates: Anthony Harris, a 6-7 forward from Northeastern (Colo.) Junior College; Lance Jeter, a 6-3 guard/forward from Polk (Fla.) Community College; Melvin Goins, a 5-10 point guard from Mount San Jacinto (Calif.) College; and DeAndre Brown, a 5-11 guard from Navarro (Texas) Community College.

Nebraska also had a visit from Myles Holley, a 6-5 guard/forward who's taking classes at Patrick Henry (Va.) Junior College. He's playing for the Heat Academy, an AAU team. Holley, who has three seasons of

eligibility, attended Nebraska's final home game with Iowa State.

Nebraska loses seniors Ade Dagunduro, Steve Harley, Paul Velandar and Nick Krenk. Dagunduro, the team's leading scorer, earned third-team All-Big 12 Conference honors.

"I couldn't be happier with what these guys have done in laying the groundwork," Sadler said, grouping this year's seniors with former players Charles Richardson and Marcus Perry in helping build the program.

"They've set the bar to a level now that if we can reach that level and maybe increase the talent a little bit, then we've got some good things coming down the road, I hope."

FACILITY DONATION

Lincoln native Tom Hendricks along with wife Mary and their children, Jennifer and Brandon, have given \$10 million toward a basketball practice facility.

Hendricks is co-founder and executive vice president of Tenaska, billed as one of the largest independent power producers in the United States. He now resides in Texas.

The estimated \$17 million project includes men's and women's basketball practice gymnasiums, coaches' offices, strength complex and athletic medicine area, as well as practice facilities for gymnastics and wrestling. The facility would be built adjacent to the Devaney Sports Center.

"We've always had the support, but now you can actually show recruits that come in here that, 'Look, I don't care what someone else may be telling you, we've got as much commitment in basketball as we do any other sport,'" Sadler said.

With regents' approval, construction could begin in August 2010, with completion set for late 2011. In the interim, fundraising will continue.

NIEMANN SURGERY

Freshman Christopher Niemann, a 6-foot-10 center from Germany, suffered an ACL tear on March 4 and underwent surgery March 11.

Niemann didn't play this season because of NCAA rules and will be a sophomore next season with three seasons of eligibility remaining. **N**

2008-09 MEN'S BASKETBALL (18-13, 8-8 BIG 12)

Date	Opponent, TV, Time
Nov. 7	Chadron State (exh.), W, 85-54
Nov. 16	San Jose State, W, 63-46
Nov. 19	at TCU, W, 62-50
Nov. 22	Arkansas-Pine Bluff, W, 67-53
Nov. 25	Saint Louis, W, 71-57
Nov. 29	Creighton, W, 54-52
Dec. 3	Alabama State, W, 80-51
Dec. 7	at Arizona State, L, 64-44
Dec. 13	at Oregon State, L, 63-64
Dec. 20	IPFW, W, 75-48
Dec. 23	UMBC, L, 64-66
Dec. 30	South Carolina State, W, 77-63
Jan. 3	Maryland Eastern Shore, W, 88-56
Jan. 5	Florida A&M, W, 81-56
Jan. 10	Missouri, W, 56-51
Jan. 14	at Iowa State, L, 65-33
Jan. 17	Kansas State, W, 73-51
Jan. 21	at Oklahoma, L, 72-61
Jan. 24	Oklahoma State, L, 76-74
Jan. 28	Kansas, L, 68-62
Jan. 31	at Texas Tech, W, 82-69
Feb. 4	at Colorado, W, 55-53
Feb. 7	Texas, W, 58-55
Feb. 14	at Missouri, L, 47-70
Feb. 18	Colorado, W, 46-41
Feb. 21	at Kansas, L, 70-53
Feb. 24	Texas A&M, L, 57-55
Feb. 28	at Kansas State, L, 77-72
March 4	Iowa State, W, 77-61
March 7	at Baylor, W, 66-62
March 11	*vs. Baylor, L, 65-49
March 17	^at New Mexico, L, 83-71

* at Big 12 Tournament

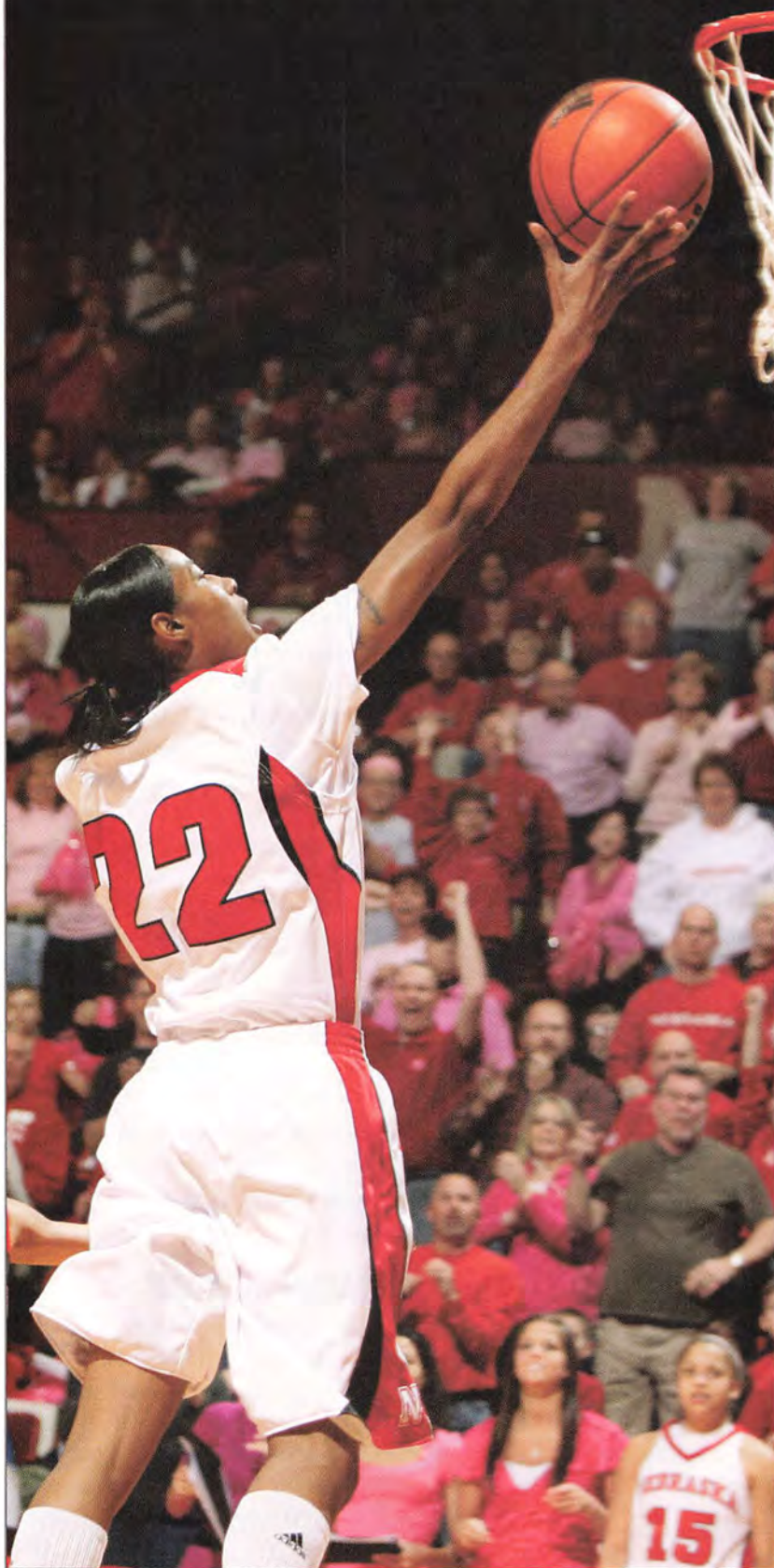
^ at National Invitation Tournament

Women's Basketball

YVONNE TURNER

BY TONY BOONE

Huskers rally for WNIT play



To the majority of Division I women's basketball teams, a bid to the WNIT is nothing more than a consolation prize for a season that wasn't quite good enough. For Nebraska, however, it's a reward for perseverance.

The injury-plagued Huskers were 10-12, in last place in the Big 12 Conference and had lost nine times in a 10-game stretch entering the final month of the regular season. Yet, somehow, they managed to win five of their last seven regular-season games, finish 15-15 overall and get a first-round bye in the WNIT.

"If you would've said two months ago that we'd be playing right now, I'd have thought that it was fairly unrealistic," Nebraska coach Connie Yori said. "It would've had to have been a long shot for us to get it turned around."

The Huskers' troubles began before the opening whistle of the 2008-09 campaign. Their best player, two-time All-Big 12 forward Kelsey Griffin, was lost for the season to an ankle injury in late August. But that was only the beginning. Cory Montgomery and Tay Hester both went through stretches where they could play but couldn't practice. Kaitlyn Burke broke a finger on her shooting hand. Nikki Bober suffered a

season-ending knee injury. And Yvonne Turner's shoulder popped out of place three times — she'll undergo surgery after the season.

"It's been a year where it's been a series of setbacks," Yori said. "And each time, we've kind of had to respond from those setbacks. Our non-conference season, and even into the first part of our conference season, we weren't healthy at all. Our injury report was ridiculously long. Kids just weren't able to go hard or go at all."

Losing Bober was most costly. Two days before the 6-foot-4 junior tore the ACL in her right knee, Nebraska had overcome an atrocious start at home to beat nationally ranked Arizona State to improve to 9-3. The team's confidence was high heading into its final non-conference game at LSU. But after the injury, which left the already Griffin-less Huskers extremely thin in the post, Nebraska began to struggle. Yori recalled looking at the schedule at that point and wondering how many of its upcoming games her team could win. She wasn't sure, and it wasn't many. Nebraska lost to LSU then dropped eight of its first nine conference games.

"We had to play people too many minutes at times, and we've had to play players that we weren't expecting to count on, at least in a role as big as they were counted on," Yori said. "Our injuries not only changed the personnel but the make-up of our team and our style of play."

It took a while for the Huskers to adjust to playing without Bober. Their season hit a low point on Feb. 8, when they suffered the second-worst defeat in school history — an 86-43 loss at No. 10 Texas A&M. Hopes of a sixth consecutive post-season bid looked dim. However, a home win over Texas Tech the following week seemed to rejuvenate Yori's club. Nebraska went on to win its three other home games after that, including a 52-47 victory over No. 20 Kansas State. It moved

to 6-10 in the Big 12 by beating Oklahoma State on the road in the regular-season finale to become eligible for post-season play.

After a first-round loss to Kansas in the Big 12 Tournament, the Huskers received a bid to the WNIT. Yori said it was more than welcomed.

"For us to get a post-season bid is tremendous considering where we were at one point in our season," she said. "Towards the end of the year, we started to play better basketball. We had more continuity. We started to figure out this is how we have to play with the people we have."

The adversity Nebraska endured this year may turn into a blessing next season. Young players got valuable experience. Upperclassmen improved. And everyone on the roster, other than Hester, is scheduled to return next season, including Griffin and

Bober.

"We have a chance, next year, to have a great season," Yori said. "On paper, if we stay healthy, this should be our best team. It should be exciting. It should be fun. It's something to look forward to, no doubt about it."

GRIFFIN WORKING WAY BACK

Spending a season on the sidelines wasn't what Kelsey Griffin had in mind for her fourth year at Nebraska. But the senior from Eagle River, Alaska, said it could end up being a blessing in disguise.

Forced into more of a coach's role after undergoing season-ending ankle surgery on Dec. 4, the two-time first-team All-Big 12 forward called the 2008-09 campaign "a learning experience."

"It's been hard, but it's been very educational," Griffin said. "I've really seen it from a coach's perspective. I think I'll be a much better floor leader next year, so I'm excited about that. And I've become more of a vocal leader, which Coach (Yori) has always wanted from me. It's really strengthened my basketball package."

Griffin, who has scored 1,348 points and has started 74 games for Nebraska, originally injured her ankle on Aug. 28. She recovered quickly, but said she knew in the back of her mind that the ankle "just wasn't right." Twelve weeks later she was headed for season-ending surgery.

Thanks to an existing redshirt year she never used, Griffin has been working her way back for next season. The opener is months away, but she's well on her way to being ready.

"We're taking my rehab super slow because we have all the time in the world to get back," Griffin said. "I just started jogging a couple of weeks ago. I feel really strong. The ankle feels great. There are always precautions after surgery, but I'm ready to get back out there with my teammates. I couldn't be more excited to start the offseason." **N**

2008-09 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (10-12, 1-8 BIG 12)

Date	Opponent, TV, Time
Oct. 31	Chadron State (exh.), W, 102-30
Nov. 5	vs. Neb.-Kearney (EXH.), W, 80-69
Nov. 14	Weber State, W, 96-47
Nov. 17	at Creighton, W, 72-67
Nov. 22	Southern Utah, W, 65-57
Nov. 24	at Denver, W, 76-55
Nov. 28	vs. Butler, W, 67-54
Nov. 29	at New Mexico, L, 51-62
Dec. 2	Oral Roberts, W, 70-51
Dec. 6	Ohio State, L, 65-69
Dec. 9	Cal State Bakersfield, W, 70-57
Dec. 12	Long Beach State, W, 76-44
Dec. 20	at UTEP, L, 53-63
Dec. 28	Arizona State, W, 62-58
Jan. 1	at LSU, L, 50-64
Jan. 10	Oklahoma, L, 77-56
Jan. 14	at Texas, L, 74-60
Jan. 17	at Missouri, L, 67-66
Jan. 21	Kansas, W, 67-58
Jan. 24	Iowa State, L, 62-48
Jan. 27	at Kansas State, L, 51-40
Jan. 31	at Colorado, L, 75-73
Feb. 4	Baylor, L, 76-71
Feb. 8	at Texas A&M, L, 86-43
Feb. 14	Texas Tech, W, 62-56
Feb. 18	at Iowa State, L, 61-38
Feb. 21	Missouri, W, 65-52
Feb. 25	Kansas State, W, 52-47
Feb. 28	at Kansas, L, 70-57
Mar. 3	Colorado, W, 75-64
Mar. 7	at Oklahoma State, W, 82-74
Mar. 12	*vs. Kansas, L, 61-56
Mar. 25	^at New Mexico, L, 54-43
*Big 12 Tournament, ^Women's NIT	

SETH BURNEY



TRACK & FIELD Outlook key to Burney's success

BY TOMMY DAHLK

Yes, it might be hard to believe, but that is the same **SETH BURNEY** competing for the Husker track and field team this year.

The junior pole-vaulter from Beatrice has a constant smile and can't be more up-beat after a great indoor season.

Burney earned All-America honors after finishing fifth in the NCAA Indoor Championships at College Station, Texas, in mid-March.

He also finished second in the Big 12 Championships and set personal bests in four consecutive meets.

Yes, life is good for Burney, after a

constant malaise seemed to follow him throughout last year.

He was recovering from a foot injury and was struggling. In fact, Burney said, going to practice every day seemed a Herculean task.

"Last year, I wanted to quit every day and didn't want to come back," he said. "It was horrible. I was in the gutters, and my head wasn't straight. I was completely frustrated. It seemed like nothing was working out for me at that time."

So after a rough year, Burney had a heart-to-heart with his coach, **KRIS GRIMES**, last fall and decided some things had to change.

"We sat down last fall, and I said I want to go 18 feet," Burney said. "I thought that if I don't get 18 feet this year, it's just dumb

because I think I have the talent.”

Grimes agreed, and they worked hard and perfected his technique while hitting the weights hard.

He entered the indoor season with a new perspective and started shattering his personal bests every meet. Burney eventually hit 17-10 at the Big 12 Championships.

The results came faster than he imagined.

“To tell you the truth, I did not think indoor season would turn out like this,” Burney said. “I was looking at being on the bubble for qualifying for nationals and hoping I’d get in. I had no idea I’d be there, but we battled.”

After his indoor success, Burney will look to post even better numbers this spring during the outdoor season.

He said he might see some drop-off at first because he might try a few new things and will lift hard. But he can’t be more excited and optimistic. That couldn’t have been said last year.

“I’m on a high right now,” Burney said. **N**



HUSKER QUICK HITS

PERFECTION

Jordan Burroughs was perfect. The junior from Sicklerville, N.J., became the 10th Husker wrestler in history to win an NCAA championship – and the first to do so without losing a match during the season. Burroughs went 35-0 at 157 pounds, finishing with a 5-1 victory against the second seed (he was the No. 1 seed) in the finals of the NCAA Championship meet at St. Louis. Three other Huskers also earned All-America honors in St. Louis: junior Craig Brester, finishing second at 197 pounds; senior Brandon Browne, fourth at 174 pounds; and senior Vince Jones, sixth at 184 pounds.

Nebraska finished fourth, with 78.5 points, behind Iowa (96.5 points), Ohio State (92.0) and Iowa State (78.5). The Huskers also finished fourth last season.

Mark Manning, in his ninth season, has now coached 27 All-Americans.

BIG 12 CHAMPS

Burroughs, Brester, Browne and Jones earned individual titles to lead Nebraska to a tie with Iowa State at the Big 12 wrestling championships at the NU Coliseum in early March. Brester, who upset Iowa State's Jake Varner in the finals, was named the meet's outstanding wrestler. Brester, who lost to Varner in the NCAA finals, finished the season at 33-4. All but one of the losses was to Varner.

Junior Stephen Dwyer finished second at 163 pounds, while redshirted freshman Tucker Lane finished third in the heavyweight division and senior captain Robert Sanders finished third at 149 pounds. Dwyer, Lane and Sanders also advanced to the NCAA Championships.

The share of the Big 12 title was Nebraska's first and its first conference title since 1995.

NCAA TITLE

Nicholas Gordon, a sophomore from Kingston, Jamaica, won the long jump competition at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships at College Station, Texas, with an effort of 26-4¼ on the final attempt of the meet. Gordon was among eight Huskers to earn All-America honors. The others were: Bjorn Barrefors, third, heptathlon; Megan Wheatley, fourth, pentathlon; Kirkland Thornton, fourth, 60-meter hurdles; Seth Burney, fifth, pole vault; Epley Bullock, sixth-tie, high jump; Chantae McMillan, eighth, pentathlon; Chris Phipps, ninth, long jump (seventh American).

In all, 13 Huskers competed at the meet, double the number from last season.

The Husker men finished in a fifth-place tie with Arizona State, their best since being runners-up in 1996, while the women finished 29th.

SAME OLD SAME OLD

The Nebraska men finished second to Texas for the second year in a row at the Big 12 Indoor Track and Field Championships at College Station, Texas, in late February. The Husker men have now finished first or second at every conference indoor championship meet since 1987.

The Husker women finished third, behind host Texas A&M and runner-up Texas Tech.

Nebraska had four individual champions. Gordon won his first Big 12 title, with a personal-best and meet record 26-1½ in the long jump. Keith Lloyd won the shot put, with a personal-best 59-4¼, 16 inches farther than his previous best. Natalie Willer won the women's pole vault, with a meet record 13-10, while Wheatley led a 1-2-4 Husker finish in the pentathlon, scoring a personal-best 4,211 points.



OPPORTUNITY AWAITS - Legendary Michigan State coach **DUFFY DAUGHERTY**, for whom he had been an assistant, encouraged **BOB DEVANEY** (right) to leave Wyoming and become the head coach at Nebraska. Daugherty told Devaney that he could win a national championship at Nebraska, something he couldn't do at Wyoming. Nebraska offered such an opportunity, according to Daugherty. And he was right. Devaney coached the Cornhuskers to back-to-back national championships. University of Nebraska Chancellor **CLIFFORD HARDIN**, who had been the dean of Michigan State's College of Agriculture, initially contacted Daugherty about Nebraska's coaching vacancy. Daugherty wasn't interested in leaving Michigan State, however, and recommended Devaney. Nebraska's on-going sellout streak began in Devaney's first season.

GAMES REMEMBERED

Sept. 19, 1959 at Memorial Stadium

Texas 20, Nebraska 0

Texas	0	14	6	0	-	20
Nebraska	0	0	0	0	-	0

(T) Jack Collins 2 run (Bobby Lackey kick)

(T) Jim Saxton 23 run (Lackey kick)

(T) Bob Gurwitz 13 pass Lackey

Attendance: 30,623



Nebraska coach **BILL JENNINGS'** two-quarterback alignment, the "tandem-T," was imaginative, all right. It also was illegal.

The Cornhuskers didn't use the formation until the fourth quarter, when the game's outcome was decided. Quarterback **TOM KRAMER** and left halfback **PAT FISCHER** (pictured) both lined up under center. The idea was to confuse the defense, which wouldn't know which of them would take the snap. The two would then go in different directions.

The series carried from the Nebraska 29-yard line to the Texas 40-yard line before the Cornhuskers were forced to punt. Fischer carried once - his only carry of the game - for a 12-yard gain, while Texas coach **DARRELL ROYAL** protested from the sideline.

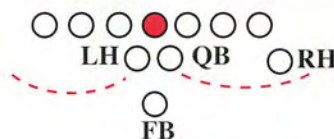
Jennings, in his third season as head coach,

had installed the alignment during the spring, working only with players who would be directly involved in the intended deception. Nebraska was looking for a way to generate some offense. Jennings' first two teams had been a combined 4-16, with seven of the losses by shutout. The Cornhuskers never scored more than 16 points during those two seasons, and then only once, in a loss at Colorado.

Big Seven Conference referee Cliff Ogden told Jennings during the game he thought using such a formation was against the rules. Ogden checked afterward and then visited the Nebraska locker room to inform Jennings it was illegal. The two argued, with Jennings going off-topic to complain about a clipping penalty that nullified what could have been a game-tying, 92-yard punt return for a touchdown by Fischer in the second quarter.

Regardless of what the rule book said, Jennings vowed to utilize elements of the alignment the next week against Minnesota but never did. The Cornhuskers won 32-12.

DID YOU KNOW: Nebraska quarterback Tom Kramer, who could run as well as pass, was a transfer from California, where he had played before serving a year in the Army. He planned to finish his career at California but the Pacific Coast Conference ruled him ineligible, so California coach Pete Elliott suggested he contact Bud Wilkinson at Oklahoma. Elliott had been a Wilkinson assistant before his one season as head coach at Nebraska in 1956. Initially, Wilkinson wasn't interested but suggested Kramer contact Nebraska coach Bill Jennings, also a former Sooner assistant. Wilkinson subsequently changed his mind, but Kramer didn't change his, coming to Nebraska and sitting out the 1958 season. Texas was ranked No. 17 going into the game and finished the regular season ranked No. 4, with a 9-1 record. Nebraska finished 4-6.



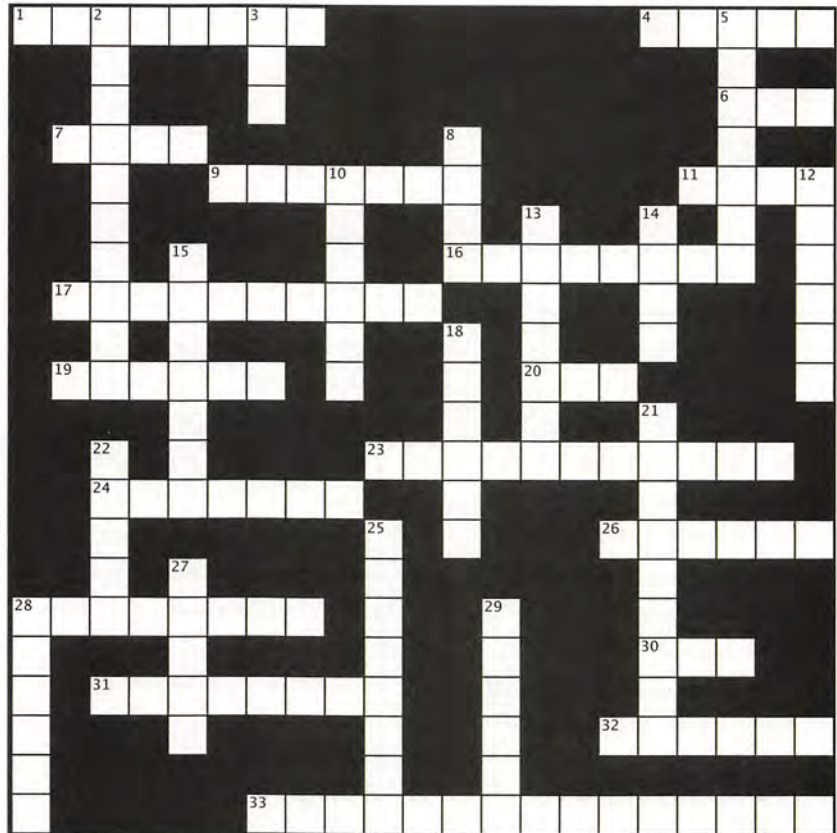
CROSSWORD & TRIVIA

ACROSS

1. Opponent in 2009 Big 12 opener
4. Offensive MVP in East-West Shrine Game
6. Wears No. 3 (offense)
7. Quarterback who recently left team
9. Ex-Husker linebacker on ballot for College Football Hall of Fame
11. Tight end in 2009 recruiting class
16. April 25-26 event
17. 2010 non-conference road opponent
19. 2008 special teams MVP
20. 2008 defensive MVP
23. 1983 Outland Trophy winner
24. Ex-Husker defensive lineman on ballot for College Football Hall of Fame
26. Offensive line coach
28. 2008 Native Son Award winner
30. Network for NU-Colorado telecast
31. Wears No. 3 (defense)
32. Defensive line coach
33. Opponent in 2009 opener

DOWN

2. April 18 event
3. Winner in 2008 Spring Game
5. Backup safety no longer with team
8. Network for NU-Missouri telecast
10. Ex-Husker punter who became baseball all-star
12. 2000 Rimington Award winner
13. Offensive lineman who played in East-West Shrine Game
14. 2008 Tom Novak Trophy winner
15. Ex-Husker offensive lineman on ballot for College Football Hall of Fame
18. Bo Pelini's college position
21. Bo Pelini's alma mater
22. 2008 offensive MVP
25. Fullback in 2009 recruiting class
27. Quarterback in 2009 recruiting class
28. Defensive lineman who participated in NFL Scouting Combine
29. Offensive lineman who participated in NFL Scouting Combine



Answers will appear in the May issue

HUSKERNUTZ



CORABELLE DOES NOT SHARE ELDON'S EXCITEMENT OVER THE START OF SPRING FOOTBALL

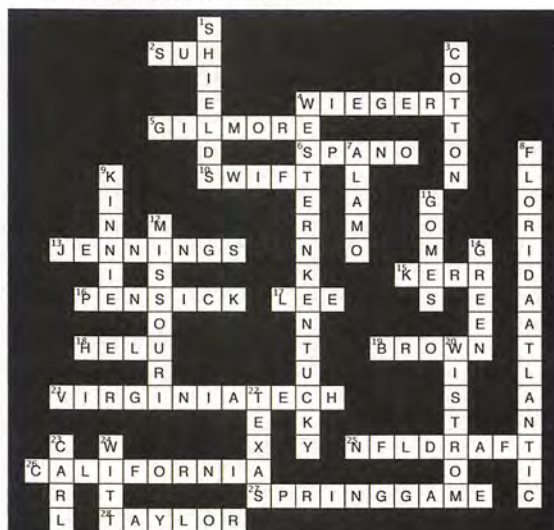
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MARCH CROSSWORD SOLUTION





IT WASN'T AN optical illusion, though Roy Helu, Jr. suggested as much.

The T-shirt was none too big. Helu clearly had gained weight in winter conditioning, significant weight. He was 198 at the beginning of last season, the effects of shoulder surgery. And he was 207 at the end. On the day of the news conference he was 222 – a solid 222.

That was the plan. He'll be better prepared to take the physical pounding now.

Someone asked Helu if he and Castille were switching roles.

Helu was asked if he felt bigger.

Helu's words characterized the optimism permeating the news conference. Players are bigger (or not), stronger and faster than a year ago, and they're more comfortable in

Coach Bo Pelini and his assistants also are more comfortable because of their year together. "I think we have a better handle this year ... on who we have, what we have on our roster right now, what exactly we want to do," he said. "And I think we have a better plan as a coaching staff on both sides of the ball, where we are right now and where we want to get to and how to get there."

"I'm looking forward to it. I know this, at this time, we're a better football team going into spring ball than we were a year ago. And I think we can be ..."

But if there were all those unknowns a year ago and Pelini produced a 9-4 record and Gator Bowl victory, what can the Cornhuskers do as the unknowns give way to familiarity?

"We made a jump last year from what they

Player expectations need to match "ours," Pelini said, referring to the coaches. "Until we're at the top, we're not satisfied. And we're not there yet. I expect to make a huge jump defensively. That's the way I see it, and it's going to start here in the next 15 practices."

"I think we're more athletic, we're stronger, I think we're more prepared to make a bigger jump than we were a year ago, in every sense of the word," said Pefini.

"Anything else for Blake?" sports information director Keith Mann asked.

Helu stepped forward: "Yeh, Blake, have you seen the new 'Twilight' series?"

The movie, based on a book series popular among young adults, was recently released on DVD. It's a love story involving teenager Isabella Swan and vampire Edward Cullen.

"Maybe I have," Lawrence replied. "Some people say I look like the 'Twilight' guy, vampire. I'll give it its props. It's a great movie ... I read it every night before I go to bed."

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